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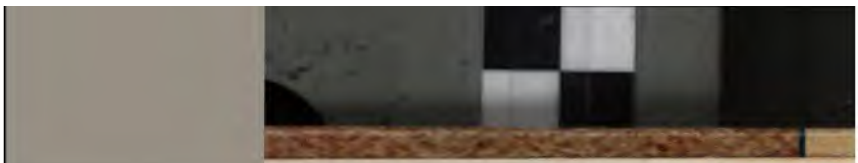

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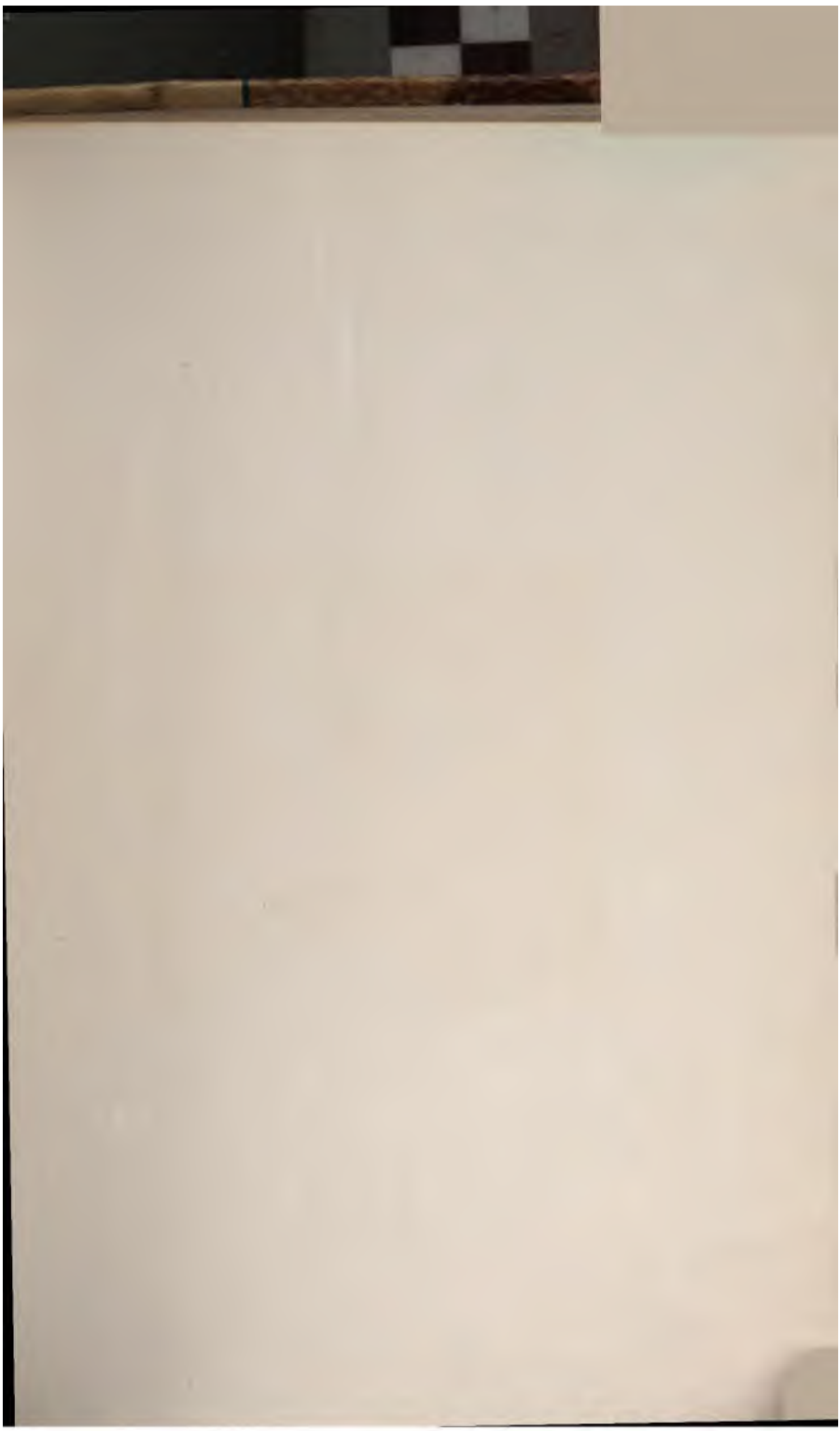

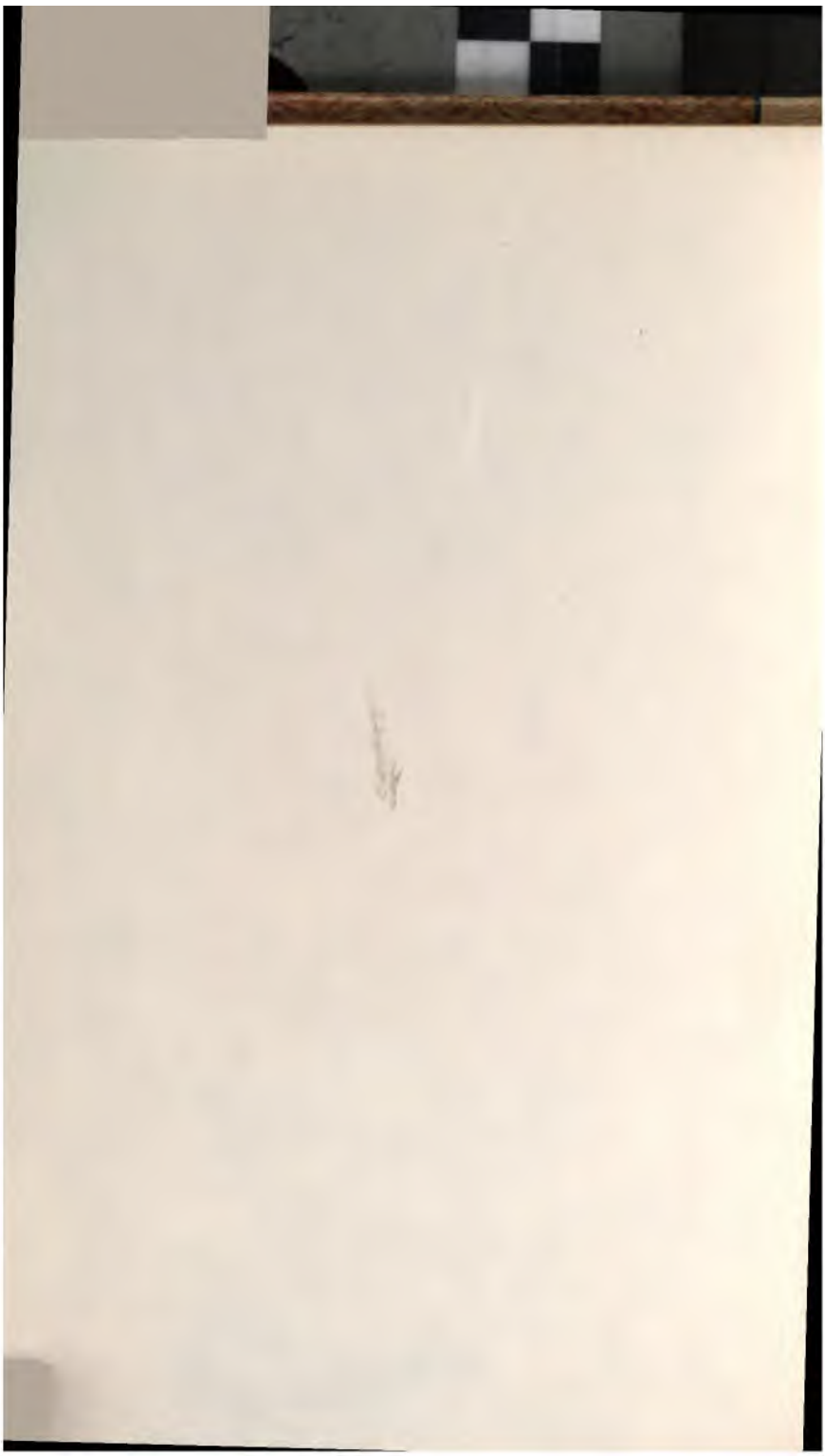

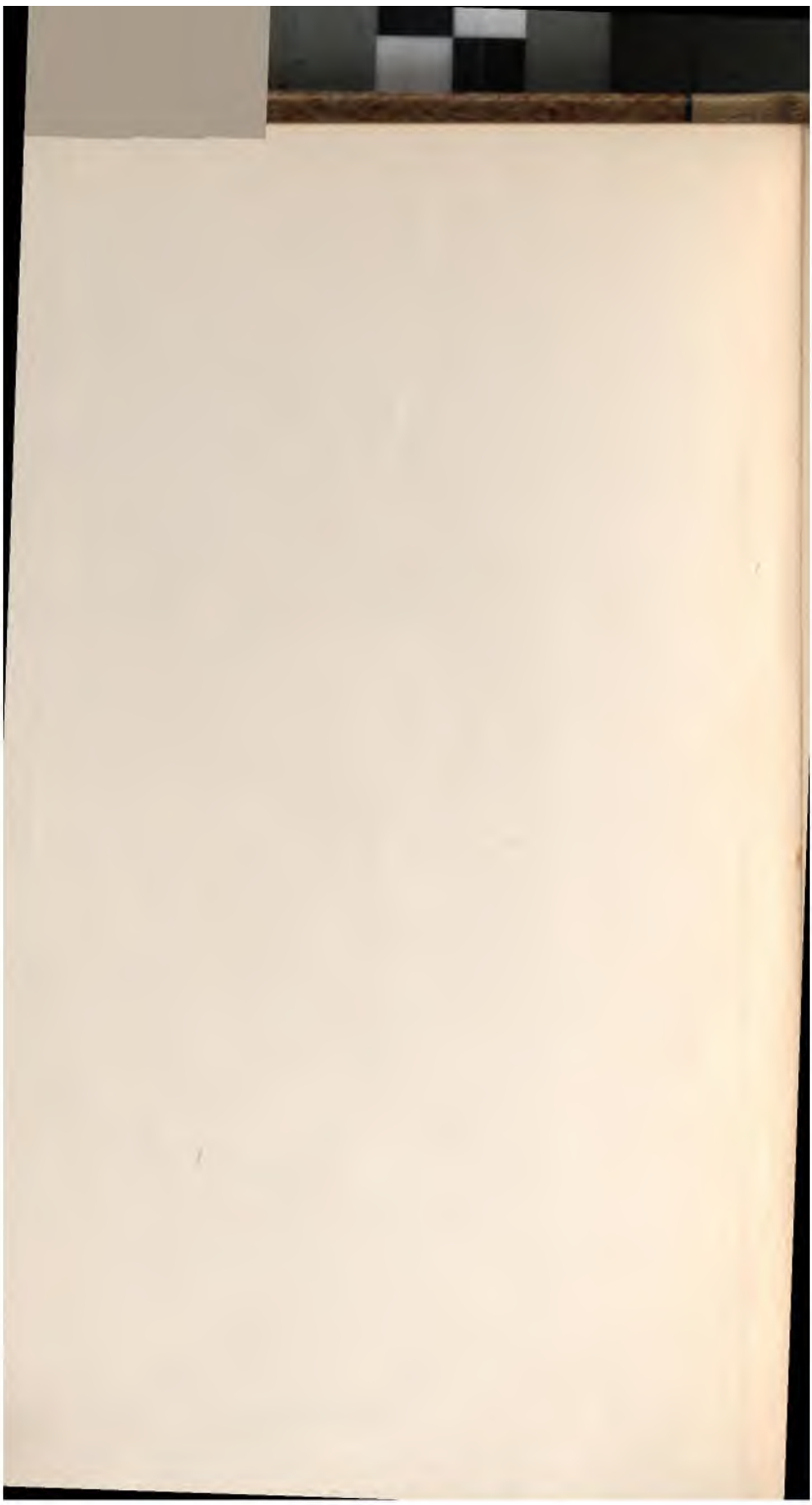

WORKING WITH THE WORKING WOMAN

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By

CORNELIA STRATTON PARKER

Author of "AN AMERICAN IDYLL"

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INTRODUCTION

THE number of books on the labor problem is indeed legion. The tragedy of the literature on any dynamic subject is that most of it is written by people who have time to do little else. Perhaps the best books on many subjects will never be written because those folk, who would be most competent to do the writing, through their vital connection with the problem at hand, never find the spare minutes to put their findings down on paper.

There could be no more dynamic subject than labor, since labor is nothing less than human beings, and what is more dynamic than human beings? It is, therefore, the last subject in the world to be approached academically. Yet most of the approach to the problems of labor is academic. Men in sanctuaries forever far removed from the endless hum and buzz and roar of machinery, with an intellectual background and individual ambitions forever far removed from the interests and desires of those who labor in factory and mill, theorize—and another volume is added to the study of labor.

But, points out some one, there are books on labor written by bona-fide workers. First, the number is few. Second, and more important, any bona-fide worker capable of writing any kind of book on any

subject, puts himself so far above the rank and file that one is justified in asking, for how many does he speak?

Suppose that for the moment your main intellectual interest was to ascertain what the average worker—not the man or woman so far advanced in the cultural scale that he or she can set his ideas intelligently on paper—thought about his job and things in general. To what books could you turn? Indeed I have come to feel that in the pages of O. Henry there is more to be gleaned on the psychology of the working class than any books to be found on economic shelves. The outstanding conclusion forced upon any reader of such books as consciously attempt to give a picture of the worker and his job is that whoever wrote the books was bound and determined to find out everything that was wrong in every investigation made, and tell all about the wrongs and the wrongs only. Goodness knows, if one is hunting for the things which should be improved in this world, one life seems all too short to so much as make a start. In all honesty, then, such books on labor should be classified under "Troubles of Workers." No one denies they are legion. Everybody's troubles are, if troubles are what you want to find.

The Schemer of Things has so arranged, praise be, that no one's life shall be nothing but woe and misery. Yea, even workers have been known to smile.

The experiences lived through in the following pages may strike the reader as superficial, artificial.

In a way they were. Yet, they fulfilled their object in my eyes, at least. I wanted to feel for myself the general "atmosphere" of a job, several jobs. I wanted to know the worker without any suspicion on the part of the girls and women I labored among that they were being "investigated." I wanted to see the world through their eyes—for the time being to close my own altogether.

There are no startling new facts or discoveries here recorded. Nothing in these pages will revolutionize anything. To such as wish the lot of the worker painted as the most miserable on earth, they will be disappointing.

Yet in being as honest as I could in recording the impressions of my experiences, I am aware that I have made possible the drawing of false conclusions. Already such false conclusions have been drawn. "See," says an "old-fashioned" employer, "the workers are happy—these articles of Mrs. Parker's show it. Why should they have better conditions? They don't want them!"

A certain type of labor agitator, or a "parlor laborite," prefer to see only the gloomy side of the worker's life. They are as dishonest as the employer who would see only the contentment. The picture must be viewed in its entirety—and that means considering the workers not as a labor problem, but as a social problem. Workers are not an isolated group, who keep their industrial adversities or industrial blessings to themselves. They and their families and dependents are the majority of our

population. As a nation, we rise no higher in the long run than the welfare of the majority. Nor can the word "welfare," if one thinks socially, ever be limited to the word "contentment." It is quite conceivable—nay, every person has seen it in actuality—that an individual may be quite contented in his lot and yet have that lot incompatible with the welfare of the larger group.

It is but as a part of the larger group that worker, employer, and the public must come to view the labor problem. When a worker is found who appears perfectly amenable to long hours, bad air, unhygienic conditions in general—and many are—somebody has to pay the price. There are thousands of contented souls, as we measure contentment, in the congested tenement districts of East Side New York. Does that fact add to our social welfare? Because mothers for years were willing to feed their children bad milk, was then the movement to provide good milk for babies a waste of time and money? Plenty of people always could be found who would willingly drink impure water. Society found that too costly, and cities pride themselves to-day on their pure water supply and low typhoid rate.

There are industrial conditions flourishing which insidiously take a greater toll of society than did ever the death of babies from unclean milk, the death of old and young from impure water. The trouble is that their effects permeate in ways difficult for the unwilling eye to see.

Perhaps in the long run, one of the most harmful

phases of modern civilization is this very contentment of not only the workers, but the employer and society at large, under conditions which are not building up a wholesome, healthy, intelligent population. Indeed, it is not so much the fault of modern industrialism as such. Perhaps it is because there are so many people in the world and the ability of us human beings, cave men only ten thousand years ago, to care for so many people has not increased with the same rapidity as the population. Our numbers have outrun our capacities. Twentieth century development calls for large-scale organization for which the human mind has shown itself inadequate.

It is well to keep in mind that no situation is the product of its own day. The working woman, for instance, we have had with us since the beginning of women—and they began a good spell ago. The problem of the working woman, as we think of it to-day, began with the beginning of modern industry. Nor is it possible to view her past without realizing that the tendency has ever been, with but few interruptions, toward improvement.

In the early factory days in our country it is known that women rose at four, took their breakfast with them to the mills, and by five were hard at work in badly constructed buildings, badly heated, badly lighted. From seven-thirty to eight-thirty there was an hour for breakfast, at noon half an hour, and from then on steady work until half past seven at night. It would be perhaps eight o'clock before the mill girls reached home, sometimes too tired to

stay awake till the end of supper. Later, hours were more generally from five in the morning until seven at night. In Lowell the girls worked two hours before breakfast and went back to the mills again in the evening after supper. By 1850 twelve hours had come to be the average working day.[1]

Wages were very low—around seventy-five cents or a dollar a week with board. Mills and factories were accustomed to provide room and board in the corporation boarding houses, poorly constructed, ill-ventilated buildings, girls often sleeping six and eight in a room. In 1836 it was estimated that the average wage for women in industry (excluding board) was thirty-seven and one-half cents a day, although one thousand sewing women investigated received on an average twenty-five cents a day. In 1835 the New York *Journal of Commerce* estimated that at the beginning of the century women's labor brought about fifty cents a week, which was equivalent to twenty-five cents in 1835. In 1845 the New York *Tribune* reported fifty thousand women averaging less than two dollars a week wages, and thousands receiving one dollar and fifty cents. Another investigation in 1845 found "female labor in New York in a deplorable degree of servitude, privation and misery, drudging on, miserably cooped up in ill-ventilated cellars and garrets." Women worked fifteen to eighteen hours a day to earn one to three dollars a week.

And yet authorities tell us that some of the mill

[1] Abbot, *Women in Industry*.

towns of New England, Lowell in particular, are looked back upon as being almost idyllic as regards the opportunities for working women. On examination it is found that what was exceptional from our point of view was not the conditions, but the factory employees. In those days work in the mills was "socially permissible." Indeed there was practically no other field of employment open to educated girls. The old domestic labors had been removed from the household—where could a girl with spirit and ability make the necessary money to carry out her legitimate desires? Her brothers "went west" —she went into the factories—with the same spirit. Ambitious daughters of New England farmers formed the bulk of cotton mill employees the first half of the nineteenth century. Their granddaughters are probably college graduates of the highest type to-day. After the long factory hours they found time for reading, debating clubs, lectures, church activities, French, and German classes. Part of the time some of the mill operatives taught school. Many of them looked forward to furthering their own education in such female seminaries as existed in those days, the expense to be met from their mill earnings. Poorly paid as mill hands were, it was often six to seven times what teachers received.

"The mills offered not only regular employment and higher wages, but educational advantages which many of the operatives prized even more highly. Moreover, the girl who had worked in Lowell was looked upon with respect as a person of importance

when she returned to her rural neighborhood. Her fashionable dress and manners and her general air of independence were greatly envied by those who had not been to the metropolis and enjoyed its advantages."[1]

By 1850 the situation had altered. With the opening of the west, opportunities for women of gumption and spirit increased. The industrial depression of 1848–49 lowered wages, and little by little the former type of operative left the mill, her place being filled largely by Irish immigrants.

The Civil War saw a great change in the world of working women. Thousands of men were taken from industry into war, and overnight great new fields of opportunity were opened to women. The more educated were needed as nurses, for teaching positions, and for various grades of clerical work deserted by men. After the close of the war farmers became more prosperous and their daughters were not forced to work for the wherewithal to acquire advantages. Add to all this the depression caused in the cotton industry due to the war—and the result of these new conditions was that when the mills reopened it was with cheap immigrant labor. What then could have been considered high wages were offered in an attempt to induce the more efficient American women operatives back to the mills, but the cost of living had jumped far higher even than high wages. The mills held no further attractions. Even the Irish deserted, their places being filled with immigrants of a lower type.

[1]Abbot, *Women in Industry*.

Since the Civil War look at us—8,075,772 women in industry, as against 2,647,157 in 1880. Almost a fourth of the entire female population over ten years of age are at work, as against about one-seventh in 1880. The next census figures will show a still larger proportion. Those thousands of women the World War threw into industry, who never had worked before, did not all get out of industry after the war. Take just the railroads, for example. In April, 1918, there were 65,816 women employed in railroad work; in October, 1918, 101,785; and in April, 1919, 86,519. In the 1910 census, of all the kinds of jobs in our country filled by men, only twelve were not also filled by women—and the next census will show a reduction there: firemen (either in manufacturing or railroads), brakemen, conductors, plumbers, common laborers (under transportation), locomotive engineers, motormen, policemen, soldiers, sailors, and marines. The interesting point is that in only one division of work are women decreasing in proportion to men—and that was women's work at the beginning—manufacturing. In agriculture, in the professions, in domestic and personal service, in trade and transportation, the number of women is creeping up, up, in proportion to the number of men. From the point of view of national health and vitality for this and the next generation, it is indeed a hopeful sign if women are giving way to men in factories, mills, and plants, and pushing up into work requiring more education and in turn not demanding such physical and nervous strain as does much of

the machine process. Also, since on the whole as it has been organized up to date, domestic service has been one of the least attractive types of work women could fill, it is encouraging (though not to the housewife) to find that the proportion of women going into domestic and personal service has fallen from forty-four and six-tenths per cent, in 1880, to thirty-two and five-tenths per cent, in 1910.

Women working at everything under the sun—except perhaps being locomotive engineers and soldiers and sailors. Why?

First, it is part of every normal human being to want to work. Therefore, women want to work. Time was when within the home were enough real life-sized jobs to keep a body on the jump morning and night. Not only mother but any other females handy. There are those who grumble that women could find enough to do at home now if they only tried. They cannot, unless they have young children or unless they putter endlessly at nonessentials, the doing of which leaves them and everybody else no better off than before they began. And it is part of the way we are made that besides wanting to work, we need to work at something we feel "gets us some place." We prefer to work at something desirable and useful. Perhaps what we choose is not really so desirable and useful, looked at in the large, but it stacks up as more desirable and more useful than something else we might be doing. And with it all, if there is to be any real satisfaction, must go some feeling of independence—of being on "one's own."

So, then, women go out to work in 1921 because there is not enough to do to keep them busy at home. They follow in part their age-old callings, only nowadays performed in roaring factories instead of by the home fireside. In part they take to new callings. Whatever the job may be, women *want* to work in preference to the nonproductiveness of most home life to-day.

Graham Wallas, in his *Great Society*, quotes the answers given by a number of girls to a woman who held their confidence as to why they worked. He wished to learn if they were happy. The question meant to the girls evidently, "Are you happier than you would have been at home?" and practically every answer was "Yes."

In a "dismal and murky," but fairly well-managed laundry, six Irish girls all answered they were happy. One said the work "took up her mind, she had been awfully discontented." Another that "you were of some use." Another, "the hours went so much faster. At home one could read, but only for a short time. Then there was the awful lonesome afternoon ahead of you." "Asked a little girl with dyed hair but a good little heart. She enjoyed her work. It made her feel she was worth something."

At another laundry, the first six girls all answered they were happy because the "work takes up your mind," and generally added, "It's awful lonesome at home," or "there is an awful emptiness at home." However, one girl with nine brothers and sisters was happy in the collar packing room just because

"it was so awful lonesome"—she could enjoy her own thoughts. An Irishwoman at another laundry who had married an Italian said, "Sure I am always happy. It leaves me no time to think." At a knitting plant one girl said "when she didn't work, she was always thinking of dead people, but work always made her cheer up directly."

The great industrial population comes from crowded tenements. It is inconceivable that enough work could be found within those walls to make life attractive to the girls and young women growing to maturity in such households.

So much for the psychological side. The fact remains that the great bulk of women in industry work because they *have* to work—they enter industrial life to make absolutely necessary money. The old tasks at which a woman could be self-supporting in the home are no longer possible in the home. She earns her bread now as she has earned it for thousands of years—spinning, weaving, sewing, baking, cooking—only to-day she is one of hundreds, thousands in a great factory. Nor is she longer confined to her traditional tasks. Men are playing a larger part in what was since time began and up to a few years ago woman's work. Women, in their need, are finding employment at any work that can use unskilled less physically capable labor.

Ever has it been the very small proportion of men who could by their unaided effort support the entire family. At no time have all the men in a country been able to support all the women, regardless of

whether that situation would be desirable. Always must the aid of womenfolk be called in as a matter of course. We have a national ideal of a living wage to the male head of the family which will allow him to support his family without forcing his wife and children into industry. Any man who earns less than that amount during the year must depend on the earnings of wife and children or else fall below the minimum necessary to subsistence, with all which that implies. In 1910, four-fifths of the heads of families in the United States earned under eight hundred dollars a year. At that same time, almost nine-tenths of the women workers living at home in New York City working in factories, mills, and such establishments, paid their entire earnings to the family. Of 13,686 women investigated in Wisconsin in 1914, only 2 per cent gave nothing to the family support. Of girls in retail stores living at home in New York City, 84 per cent paid their entire earnings to the family. Work, then, for the majority of women, is more apt to be cold economic necessity—not only for herself, but for her family.

Besides the fact that great numbers of women must work and many want to work, there are the reasons for women's work arising in modern industry itself. First, a hundred years ago, there was the need for hands in the new manufactures, and because of the even more pressing agricultural demands, men could not be spared. The greater the subdivisions of labor up to a certain point, the simpler the process, and the more women can be used, unskilled

as they are ever apt to be. Also they will work at more monotonous, more disagreeable work than men, and for less wages. Again, women's entrance into new industries has often been as strike breakers, and once in, there was no way to get them out. Industrial depressions throw men out of work, and also women, and in the financial pressure following, women turn to any sort of work at any sort of pay, and perhaps open a new wedge for women's work in a heretofore untried field, desirable or undesirable.

The freedom from having to perform every and all domestic functions within the four walls of home is purchased at the expense of millions of toilers outside the home, the majority of whom do not to-day receive enough wages, where they are the menfolk to support their own families; nor where they are single women, to support themselves. The fact that men cannot support their families forces women in large numbers into industry. There would be nothing harmful in that, if only industry were organized so that participation in it enriched human lives. Remembering always that where industry takes women from the care of young children, society and the nation pay dearly; for, inadequate and ignorant as mothers often are regarding child care, their substitutes to-day are apt to be even less efficient.

Pessimists marshal statistics to show that modern industrialism is going to rack and ruin. Maybe it is. But pessimism is more a matter of temperament than statistics. An optimist can assemble a most cheerful array of figures to show that everything is on the

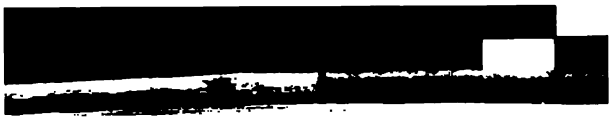
up. Temperament again. Industry is what industry does. If you are feeling gloomy to-day, you can visit factories where it is plain to see that no human being could have his lot improved by working there. Such factories certainly exist. If you would hug your pessimism to your soul, then there are many factories you must stay away from. Despite all the pessimists, there is a growing tendency to increase the welfare of human beings in industry.

It is but an infinitesimal drop any one individual can contribute to hasten a saner industrialism. Yet some of us would so fain contribute our mite! Where the greatest need of all lies is that the human beings in industry, the employer and the employees, shall better understand one another, and society at large better understand both. My own amateur and humble experiences here recorded have added much to my own understanding of the problems of both manager and worker.

Can they add even a fraction to the understanding of anyone else?

CORNELIA STRATTON PARKER.

Woods Hole,
August, 1921.



WORKING WITH THE WORKING WOMAN

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I

No. 1075 Packs Chocolates

WISE heads tell us we act first—or decide to act first—and reason afterward. Therefore, what could be put down in black and white as to why we took up factory work is of minor value or concern. Yet everyone persists in asking why? So then, being merely as honest as the Lord allows, we answer first and foremost because we wanted to. Isn't that enough? It is the why and wherefore of almost everything anyone does any place at any time. Only the more adept can concoct much weightier reasons as an afterthought. There is only one life most of us doubting humans are absolutely sure of. That one life gets filled with so much of the same sort of performance day in and day out; usually only an unforeseen calamity—or stroke of luck—throws us into a way of living and doing things which is not forever just as we lived and did things yesterday and the day before.

Yet the world is so full of the unexplored! To those who care more for people than places, around every corner is something new—a world only dreamt of, if that. Why should all one's life be taken up with the kind of people we were born among, doing the sort of things our aunts and our uncles and our cousins and our friends do? Soon there creeps in—soon? yes, by six years or younger—that comforting belief that as we and our aunts and our uncles and our cousins and our friends do, so does—or should do—the world. And all the time we and our aunts and our uncles and our cousins and our friends are one little infinitesimal drop in one hundred million people, and what those above and below and beyond and around about think and do, we know nothing, nor care nothing, about. But those others are the world, with us, a speck of—well, in this case it happened to be curiosity—in the midst of it all.

Therefore, being curious, we decided to work in factories. In addition to wanting to feel a bona-fide part of a cross section of the world before only viewed second or third hand through books, there was the desire better to understand the industrial end of things by trying a turn at what some eight million or so other women are doing. "Women's place is the home." All right—that side of life we know first hand. But more and more women are not staying home, either from choice or from necessity. Reading about it is better than nothing. Being an active part of it all is better still. It is one thing to lounge on an overstuffed davenport and read about the

injurious effect on women of long hours of standing. It is another to be doing the standing.

Yet another reason for giving up some months to factory work, besides the adventure of it, besides the desire to see other angles of life for oneself, to experience first hand the industrial end of it. So much of the technic of the world to-day we take as a matter of course. Clothes appear ready to put on our backs. As far as we know or care, angels left them on the hangers behind the mirrored sliding doors. Food is set on our tables ready to eat. It might as well have been created that way, for all our concern. The thousands of operations that go into an article before the consumer buys it—no, there is no reason why use and want should make us callous and indifferent to the hows and wherefores. Never was there such an age. Let's poke behind the scenes a bit.

So, factories it was to be. Not as a stranger snooping in to "investigate." As a factory girl working at her job—with all that, we determined to peek out of the corner of our eyes, and keep both ears to the wind, lest we miss anything from start to finish. Artificial, of course. Under the circumstances, since we were born how and as we were, and this had happened and that, we were not an honest Eyetalian living in a back bedroom on West Forty-fourth Street near the river.

We did what we could to feel the part. Every lady in the land knows the psychology of dress—though not always expressed by her in those terms. She feels the way she looks, not the other way round.

So then, we purchased large green earrings, a large bar pin of platinum and brilliants ($1.79), a goldy box of powder (two shades), a lip stick. During the summer we faded a green tam-o'shanter so that it would not look too new. For a year we had been saving a blue-serge dress (original cost $19) from the rag bag for the purpose. We wore a pair of old spats which just missed being mates as to shade, and a button off one. Silk stockings—oh yes, silk—but very darned. A blue sweater, an orange scarf, and last, but not least—

If you had been brought up in a fairly small city by female relatives who were one and all school-teachers, who had watched over your vocabulary (unsuccessfully) as they hung over your morals; if you had been taught, not in so many words, but insidiously, that breaking the Ten Commandments (any one or the entire ten), split infinitives, and chewing gum, were one in the sight of God, or the devil—then you could realize the complete metamorphosis when, in addition to the earrings and the bar pin, the green tam and the lip stick, you stepped up to the Subway newsstand and boldly demanded a package of—chewing gum. And then and there got out a stick and chewed it, and chewed it on the Subway and chewed it on the streets of New York. Some people have to go to a masquerade ball to feel themselves some one else for a change. Others, if they have been brought up by school-teachers, can get the same effect with five cents' worth of chewing gum.

After all, one of the most attractive features about being "well brought up" is the fun of sloughing off. The fun of sloughing off a lot at once! Had it ever been known ahead of time the fascination of doing forbidden things, just that first factory morning would have been worth the whole venture. To read the morning paper over other people's shoulders—not furtively, but with a bold and open eye. To stare at anything which caught one's attention. (Bah! all that is missed in New York because it has been so ground into the bone that it is impolite to stare!) And to talk to any one, male or female, who looked or acted as if he or she wanted to talk to you. Only even a short experience has taught that that abandon leads to more trouble than it is worth. What a pity mere sociability need suffer so much repression! We hate to make that concession to our upbringers.

When the time for beginning factory work came there appeared but one advertisement among "Help Wanted—Female" which did not call for "experience." There might have to be so much lying, direct and indirect, to do. Better not start off by claiming experience when there was absolutely none—except, indeed, had we answered advertisements for cooks only, or baby tenders, or maids of all work. One large candy factory bid for "girls and women, good wages to start, experience not necessary," and in a part of town which could be reached without starting out the night before. At 7.15 of a Monday morning we were off, with a feeling something akin to stage fright. Once we heard a hobo tell of the first time he

ever tried to get on a freight train in the dark of night when it was moving. But we chewed our gum very boldly.

One of the phases of finding a job often criticized by those who would add somewhat of dignity to labor is the system of hiring. Like a lot of other things, perhaps, you don't mind the present system if you get by. Here was this enormous good-looking factory. On one side of the front steps, reaching all the way up into the main entrance hall, stood a line of men waiting for jobs; on the other side, though not near so long a line, the girls. The regular employees file by. At last, about eight o'clock, the first man is beckoned. Just behind the corner of a glassed-in telephone booth, but in full view of all, he is questioned by an employee in a white duck suit. Man after man is sent on out, to the growing discouragement, no doubt, of those remaining in line. At last, around a little corner in the stairs, the first girl is summoned. The line moves up. A queer-looking man with pop eyes asks a few questions. The girl goes on upstairs. I am fourth in line—a steam heater next and the actions of my insides make the temperature seem 120 at least. My turn.

"How much experience you've had?"

"None."

"What you work in last?"

"Didn't work in a factory—been doin' housework —takin' care of kids."

"Well, I start you packing. You get thirteen dollars this week, fourteen dollars next—you understand?"

He writes something on a little card and I go upstairs with it. There I am asked my name, age (just did away with ten years while I was at it). Married or single? Goodness! hadn't thought of that. In the end a lie there would make less conversation. Single. Nationality—Eyetalian? No, American. It all has to be written on a card. At that point my eye lights on a sign which reads: "Hours for girls 8 A.M.–6 P.M. Saturdays 8–12." Whew! My number is 1075. The time clock works so. My key hangs on this hook; then after I ring up, it hangs here. (That was an entrancing detail I had not anticipated—made me wish we had to ring up at noon as well as morning and night.) Locker key 222. A man takes me in the elevator to the third floor and there hands me over to Ida. The locker works thus and so. Didn't I have no apron? No—but tomorrow I'd bring it, and a cap. Sure.

Three piles of boxes and trucks and barrels and Ida opens a great door like a safe, and there we are in the packing room—from the steam heater downstairs to the North Pole. Cold? Nothing ever was so cold. Ten long zinc-topped tables, a girl or two on each side. At the right, windows which let in no air and little light, nor could you see out at all. On the left, shelves piled high with wooden boxes. Mostly all a body can think of is how cold, cold, cold it is. Something happens to chocolates otherwise.

That first day it is half-pound boxes. My side of the table holds some sixty at a time. First the date gets stamped on the bottom, then partitions are

fitted in. "Here's your sample. Under the table you'll find the candies, or else ask Fannie, there. You take the paper cups so, in your left hand, give them a snap so, lick your fingers now and then, slip a cup off, stick the candy in with your right hand." And Ida is off.

The saints curse the next person who delicately picks a chocolate from its curled casing and thinks it grew that way—came born in that paper cup. May he or she choke on it! Can I ever again buy chocolates otherwise than loose in a paper bag? You push and shove—not a cup budges from its friends and relatives. Perhaps your fingers need more licking. Perhaps the cups need more "snapping." In the end you hold a handful of messed-up crumpled erstwhile cup-shaped paper containers, the first one pried off looking more like a puppy-chewed mat by the time it is loose and a chocolate planted on its middle. By then, needless to remark, the bloom is off the chocolate. It has the look of being clutched in a warm hand during an entire circus parade. Whereat you glance about furtively and quickly eat it. It is nice the room is cold; already you fairly perspire. One mussed piece of naked brown paper in a corner of a box.

The table ahead, fingers flying like mad over the boxes, works Annie. It is plain she will have sixty boxes done before I have one. Just then a new girl from the line of that morning is put on the other side of my table. She is very cold. She fares worse with brown paper cups than I. Finally she puts

down the patient piece of chocolate candy and takes both hands to the job of separating one cup from the others. She places what is left of the chocolate in the middle of what is left of the paper, looks at me, and better than any ouija board I know what is going on in her head. I smile at her, she smiles back, and she eats that first chocolate. Tessie and I are friends for life.

Then we tackle the second union of chocolate and paper. Such is life. Allah be praised, the second goes a shade less desperately than the first, the third than the second, and in an hour chocolate and paper get together without untoward damage to either. But the room stays feeling warm. Anon a sensation begins to get mixed up with the hectic efforts of fingers. Yes, yes—now it's clear what it is—feet! Is one never to sit down again as long as one lives? Clumsy fingers—feet. Feet—clumsy fingers. Finally you don't give a cent if you never learn to pry those paper cups loose without wrenching your very soul in the effort. If once before you die—just once—you can sit down! Till 12 and then after, 1 till 6. Help!

A bell rings. "All right, girls!" sings Ida down the line. Everyone drops everything, and out into the warm main third floor we go. All the world is feet. Somehow those same feet have to take their possessor out to forage for food. Into a little dirty, crowded grocery and delicatessen store we wedge ourselves, to stand, stand, stand, until at last we face the wielder of a long knife. When in Rome do as the Romans do. "A bologna and a ham sandwich

and five cents' worth of pickles." Slabs of rye bread, no butter, large, generous slices of sausage and ham which hang down curtainlike around the bread—twenty-one cents. Feet take me back to the factory lunch room. At last I flop on a chair. Sing songs to chairs; write poems to chairs; paint chairs!

Dear German Tessie, pal of the morning, she who ate more chocolates than I and thus helped to sustain my moral courage—Tessie and I eat bologna sausage sandwiches together and *sit*. The feet of Tessie are very, very badly off—ach!—but they feel—they feel—jus' fierce—and till six o'clock—"Oh, my Gawd!" says Tessie, in good English.

A gong sounds. Up we go to the ice box packing room. It sends the shivers down our spines. But already there is a feeling of sauntering in like an old hand at the game. What's your business in life? Packing chocolates. The half-pound boxes get finished, wax paper on top, covered, stacked, counted, put on the truck.

"Lena! Start the girl here in on 'assorteds.'"

Pert little Lena sidles up alongside and nudges me in the ribs.

"Say, got a fella?"

I give Lena one look, for which Belasco should pay me a thousand dollars a night. Lena reads it out loud quick as a wink. She snickers, pokes me in the ribs again, and, "What to hell do I think you are, hey?" That's just what I'd meant. "Gee!" says Lena. "Some fool what can't get some kind of a dope!"

"You said it!"

"Say, got more 'n one dope?" asks Lena, hopefully. Meanwhile she sets out, with my aid, row after row of dinky little deep boxes.

"Say now," say I to Lena, "and what would a girl be doin' with jus' *one* dope?"

"You said it!" says Lena.

At which follows a discussion on dopes, ending by Lena's promising never to vamp my dope if I won't vamp hers.

"Where'd ya work last?" asks Lena.

One thing the first day taught me. If you want to act the part and feel the part, earrings and gum help, but if there is one thing you are more conscious of than all else, it is such proper English as you possess —which compared to Boston is not much, but compared to Lena and Ida and Mary and Louise and Susie and Annie is painfully flawless. Chew hard as ever you can, if you tell Fannie, "There aren't any more plantations," it echoes and re-echoes and shrieks at you from the four sides of Christendom. But holler, "Fannie, there ain't no more plantations!" and it is like the gentle purring of a home cat by comparison. Funny how it is easier to say "My Gawd!" and "Where t' hell's Ida!" than "I 'ain't got none." Any way round, you never do get over being conscious of your grammar. If it is correct, it is lonesome as the first robin. If it is properly awful, there are those school-teacher upbringers. I am just wondering if one might not be dining with the head of the university philosophy department and his

academic guests some night and hear one's voice uttering down a suddenly silent table, "She ain't livin' at that address no more." Utterly abashed, one's then natural exclamation on the stillness would be, "My Gawd!" Whereat the hostess would busily engage her end of the table in anguished conversation, giving her husband one look, which, translated into Lena's language, would say, "What t' hell did we ask her for, anyhow?"

Is one to write of factory life as one finds it, or expurgated? I can hear the upbringers cry "expurgated"! Yet the way the girls talked was one of the phases of the life which set the stamp of difference on it all. What an infinitesimal portion of the population write our books! What a small proportion ever read them! How much of the nation's talking is done by the people who never get into print! The proportion who read and write books, especially the female folk, live and die in the belief that it is the worst sort of bad taste, putting it mildly, to use the name of the Creator in vain, or mention hell for any purpose whatsoever. Yet suddenly, overnight, you find yourself in a group who would snap their fingers at such notions. Sweet-faced, curly-headed Annie wants another box of caramels. Elizabeth Witherspoon would call, "Fannie, would you be so kind as to bring me another box of caramels?" Annie, without stopping her work or so much as looking up, raises her voice and calls down the room—and in her heart she is the same exactly as Elizabeth W.—"Fannie, you bum, bring me a

box of car'mels or I'll knock the hell clean out o' ya."

According to Elizabeth's notions Fannie should answer her, "One moment, Miss Elizabeth; I'm busy just now." What Fannie (with her soul as pure as drifted snow) does call back to Annie is,

"My Gawd! Keep your mouth shut. 'Ain't you got sense enough to see I'm busy!"

Annie could holler a hundred times, and she does, that she'd knock the hell out of Fannie, and God would love her every bit as much as he would love Miss Elizabeth Witherspoon, who has been taught otherwise and never said hell in her life, not even in a dark closet. Fannie and all the other Fannies and Idas and Louisas, say, "My Gawd!" as Miss Elizabeth says "You don't say!" and it is all one to the Heavenly Father. Therefore, gentle reader, it must be all one to you. There is not the slightest shade of disrespect in Annie's or Fannie's hearts as they shower their profanity on creation in general. There is not the slightest shade in mind as I write of them.

So then, back that first day Lena asked, "Where'd ya work last?"

"Didn't work in a factory before."

"'Ain't ya?"

"No, I 'ain't." (Gulp.) "I took care of kids."

"Gee! but they was fresh."

"You said it!"

"Lena!" hollers Ida. "Get ta work and don't talk so much!" Whereat Lena gives me another poke in my cold ribs and departs. And Tessie and I

pack "assorteds": four different chocolates in the bottom of each box, four still different ones in the top—about three hundred and fifty boxes on our table. We puff and labor on the top layer and Ida breezes along. "My Gawd! Look at that! Where's your cardboards?"

Tessie and I look woebegone at one another. Cardboards? Cardboards?

Ida glues her Eyetalian eye on Lena down the line. "Lena, you fool, didn't you tell these here girls about cardboards? . . . My Gawd! My Gawd!" says Ida. Whereat she dives into our belabored boxes and grabs those ached-over chocolates and hurls them in a pile. "Get all them top ones out. Put in cardboards. Put 'em all in again." Tessie and I almost could have wept. By that time it is about 4. We are all feet, feet, FEET. First I try standing on one foot to let the other think I might really, after all, be sitting down. Then I stand on it and give the other a delusion. Then try standing on the sides, the toes, the heels. FEET! "Ach! Mein Gott!" moans Tessie. "To-morrow I go look for a job in a biscuit factory."

"Leave me know if you get a sit-down one."

And in that state—FEET—Ida makes us pack over the whole top layer in three hundred and fifty boxes. Curses on Lena and her "dopes." Or curses on me that I could so suddenly invent such picturesque love affairs that Lena forgot all about cardboards.

About then my locker key falls through a hole in my waist pocket and on to the floor and out of sight. In the end it takes a broom handle poked about

diligently under the bottom shelf of our table to make a recovery. Before the key appear chocolates of many shapes and sizes, long reposing in oblivion under the weighty table. The thrifty Spanish woman behind me gathers up all the unsquashed ones and packs them. "Mus' be lots of chocolates under these 'ere tables, eh?" she notes wisely and with knit brows. As if to say that, were she boss, she'd poke with a broom under each and every bottom shelf and fill many a box.

At least my feet get a moment's rest while I am down on my hands and knees among the debris from under the tables.

By five o'clock Tessie thinks she'll throw up her job then and there. "Ach! Ach! My feet!" she moans. I secretly plan to kill the next person who gives me a box of chocolate candy.

Surely it is almost 6.

Five minutes after 5.

The bell has forgotten to ring. It must be 7.

Quarter after 5.

Now for sure and certain it is midnight.

Half-past 5.

My earrings begin to hurt. You can take off earrings. But FEET—

Tessie says she's eaten too many candies; her stomach does her pain. Her feet aren't so hurting now her *magen* is so bad. I couldn't eat another chocolate for five dollars, but my stomach refused to feel in any way that takes my mind in the least off my feet.

Eternity has passed on. It must be beyond the Judgment Day itself.

Ten minutes to 6.

When the bell does ring I am beyond feeling any emotion. There is no part of me with which to feel emotion. I am all feet, and feet either do not feel at all or feel all weary unto death. During the summer I had played one match in a tennis tournament 7–5, 5–7, 13–11. I had thought I was ready to drop dead after that. It was mere knitting in the parlor compared to how I felt after standing at that table in that candy factory from 8 A.M. to 6 P.M., with a bit of a half-hour's sitting at noon.

Somehow you could manage to endure it all if it were not for the crowning agony of all—standing up on the Subway going home. I am no aggressive feminist, and I am no old-fashioned clinging vine, but I surely do hate, hate, hate every man in that Subway who sits back in comfort (and most of them look as if they had been sitting all day) while I and my feet stand up. When in my utter anguish I find myself swaying with the jerks and twists of the express in front of a person with a Vandyke beard reading *The Gospel According to St. John*, I long with all the energy left in me (I still have some in my arms) to grab that book out of his hands, fling it in his face, and hiss, "Hypocrite!" at him. I do not believe I ever knew what it was really and honestly to hate a person before. If it had been the *Police Gazette* I could have borne up under it. But *The Gospel According to St. John*—my Gawd!

Thus ends my first factory day. It is small comfort to calculate I stepped on more chocolates in those nine hours than I usually eat in a year. To be sure, it was something new on the line of life's experiences. If that man in front of me were only a chocolate with soft insides and I could squash him flat! Yes, there was enough energy in my feet for that. To get my heel square above him and then *stamp*—ugh! the sinner! He continues reading *The Gospel According to St. John*, nor so much as looks up to receive my last departing glare as I drag myself off at 116th Street.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, the next morning my feet feel as if they had never been stood on before. What if we do have to stand up in the Subway all the way down? Who minds standing in the Subway? And then stand in the jammed and elbowing cross-town car. Who cares? And how we do walk up those factory steps as if we owned the world! The chestiness of us as we take our key off left-hand hook 1075, ring up under the clock (twenty minutes early we are) and hang up on No. 1075 right; but it seems you are late if you are not ten minutes early. It is the little tricks like that you get wise about.

I saunter over to the elevator with a jam of colored girls—the majority of the girls in that factory were colored. I call out, "Third, please." Oh, glory be! Why were we ever born? That elevator man turns around and pierces me with his eye as though I were the man with the Vandyke beard in the Subway, and he, the elevator man, were I. "*Third* floor did ya

say? And since when does the elevator lift ya to the *third* floor? If ya want the sixth floor ya can ride. *Third* floor! My Gawd! *Third* floor!" And on and on he mutters and up and up I go, all the proud feelings of owning the world stripped from me —exposed before the multitudes as an ignoramus who didn't know any better than to ride in the elevator when she was bound only for the third floor. "*Third* floor," continues muttering the elevator man. At last there is no one left in the elevator but the muttering man and me. "Well," I falter, chewing weakly on my Black Jack, "What shall I do, then?"

"I'll leave ya off at the third this time, but don't ya try this trick again."

"Again? Goodness! You don't think I'd make this mistake twice, do you?"

"*Twice?*" he bellows. "*Twice?* Didn't I have this all out with ya yesterday mornin'?"

"Goodness, no!" I try to assure him, but he is putting me off at third and calling after me: "Don't I know I did tell ya all this yesterday mornin'? And don't ya forget it next time, neither." It must be awful to be that man's wife. But I love him compared to the Vandyke beard in the Subway reading *The Gospel According to St. John.*

Everybody is squatting about on scant corners and ledges waiting for the eight o'clock bell. I squat next the thrifty Spanish lady, whereat she immediately begins telling me the story of her life.

"You married?" she asks. No. "Well don' you do it," says the fat and mussy Espaniole, as the girls

called her. "I marry man—five years, all right. One morning I say, 'I go to church—you go too?' He say 'No, I stay home.' I go church. I come home. I fin' him got young girl there. I say, 'You clear out my house, you your young girl!' Out he go, she go. 'Bout one year 'go he say he come back. I say no you don'. He beg me, beg me come home. I say no, no, no. He write me letter, letter, letter. I say no, no, no. Bymby I say alright, you come live my house don't you *touch* me, hear? Don' you *touch* me. He live one room, I live one room. He no touch me. Two weeks 'go he die. Take all my money, put him in cemetery. I have buy me black waist, black skirt. I got no money more. I want move from that house—no want live that house no more—give me bad dreams. I got no money move. Got son thirteen. He t'ink me fool have man around like that. I no care. See he sen's letter, letter, letter. Now I got no money. I have work." The bell rings. We shiver ourselves into the ice box.

No Tessie across the table. Instead a strange, unkempt female who sticks it out half an hour, announces she has the chills in her feet, and departs. Her place is taken by a slightly less disheveled young woman who claims she'd packed candy before where they had seats and she thought she'd go back. They paid two dollars less a week, but it was worth two dollars to sit down. How she packs! The sloppiest work I ever saw. It outrages my soul. The thrill of new pride I have when Ida gets through swearing at her and turns to me.

"Keep your eye on this girl, will ya? Gee! she packs like a fright!" And to the newcomer: "You watch that girl across the table" (me, she means—me!) "and do the way she does."

No first section I ever got in economics gave me such joy.

But, ah! the first feeling of industrial bitterness creeps in. Here is a girl getting fourteen dollars a week. Tessie was promised fourteen dollars a week. I packed faster, better, than either of them for thirteen dollars. I would have fourteen dollars, too, or know the reason why. Ida fussed and scolded over the new girls all day. The sweetness of her entire neglect of me!

By that noon my feet hardly hurt at all. I sit in a quiet corner to eat rye-bread sandwiches brought from home, gambling on whom I will draw for luncheon company. Six colored girls sit down at my table. A good part of the time they spend growling on the subject of overtime. I am too new to know what it is all about.

The lunch room is a bare, whitewashed, huge affair, with uplifting advice on the walls here and there. "Any fool can take a chance; it takes brains to be careful," and such like. One got me all upset: "America is courteous to its women. Gentlemen will therefore, please remove their hats in this room." [illegible] Vandyke beard in the Subway!

By 4.30 again I think my feet will be the death of me. That last hour and a half! Louie, the general errand boy of our packing room, brushes by our table

with some trays and knocks about six of my carefully packed boxes on the floor. "You Louie!" I holler, and I long to have acquired the facility to call lightly after him, as anyone else would have done, "Say, you go to hell!" Instead, mustering all the reserve force I can, the best showing I am able to make is, "You Louie! Go off and die!" I almost hold my own—468 boxes of "assorteds" do I pack. And again the anguishing stand in the Subway. I hate men—hate them. I just hope every one of them gets greeted by a nagging wife when he arrives home. Hope she nags all evening. . . . If enough of those wives really did do enough nagging, would the men thereupon stay downtown for dinner and make room in the Subway for folk who had been standing, except for one hour, from 7.15 A.M.? At last I see a silver lining to the dark cloud of marital unfelicity. . . .

Lillian of the bright-pink boudoir cap engaged me in conversation this morning. Lillian is around the Indian summer of life—as to years, but not atmosphere. Lillian has seen better days. Makes sure you know it. Never did a lick of work in her life. At that she makes a noise with her upper lip the way a body does in southern Oregon when he uses a toothpick after a large meal. "No, sir, never did a lick." Lillian says "did" and not "done." Practically no encouragement is needed for Lillian to continue. "After my husband died I blew in all the money he left me in two years. Since then I have been packing chocolates." How long ago was that?

"Five years."

"My Gawd," I say, and it comes natural-like. "What did you do with your feet for five years?"

"Oh, you get used to it," says Lillian. "For months I cried every night. Don't any more. But I lie down while I'm warmin' up my supper, and then I go to bed soon as its et."

Five years!

"Goin' to vote?" asks Lillian.

"Sure."

"I'm not," allows Lillian. "To my notions all that votin' business is nothing for a lady to get mixed up in. No, sir." Lillian makes that noise with her upper lip again. Lillian's lips are very red, her eyebrows very black. I'll not do anything, though, with my eyebrows. Says Lillian: "No, siree, not for a lady. I got a good bet up on the election. Yes, sir!—fifty dollars on Harding."

And five years of going to bed every night after supper.

Tessie is back. I do love Tessie, and I know Tessie loves me. She had not gone hunting for another job, as I thought. Her husband had had his elbow broken with an electric machine of some sort where he works on milk cans. The morning before she had taken him to the hospital. That made her ten minutes late to the factory. The little pop-eyed man told her, "You go on home!" and off she went. "But he tell me that once more I no come back again," said Tessie, her cheeks very red.

I begin to get the "class feeling"—to understand

a lot of things I wanted to know first hand. In the first place, there is no thought ever, and I don't see in that factory how there can be, for the boss and his interests. Who is he? Where is he? The nearest one comes to him is the pop-eyed man at the door. Once in a while Ida hollers "For Gawd's sake, girls, work faster!" Now that doesn't inspire to increased production for long. There stands Tessie across the table from me—peasant Tessie from near München, with her sweet face and white turned-up cap. She packs as fast as she can, but her hands are clumsy and she can't seem to get the difference between chocolates very well. It is enough to drive a seer crazy. They change the positions on the shelves every so often; the dipping-machine tenders cut capers and mark the same kind of chocolates differently to-day from yesterday. By three in the afternoon you're too sick of chocolates to do any more investigating by sampling. Even Ida herself has sometimes to poke a candy in the bottom—if it feels one way it's "marsh"; another, it's peach; another, it's coconut. But my feeling is not educated and I poke, and then end by having to bite, and then, just as I discover it is peach, after all, some one has run off with the last box and Ida has to be found and a substitute declared.

Tessie gives up in despair and hurls herself on me. So then Tessie is nearest to me in the whole factory, and Tessie is slow. The faster I pack the more it shows up Tessie's slowness. If Ida scolded Tessie it would break my heart. The thought of the man

who owns that factory, and his orders and his p
and his obligations, never enter my or any
packer's head. I will not pack so many boxes
Tessie gets left too far behind.

Then a strange thing happens. All of a sud
get more interested in packing chocolates than
thing else on earth. A little knack or twist com
me—my fingers fly (for me). I forget Tessi
forget the time. I forget my feet. How many
can I pack to-day? That is all I can think o
don't want to hear the noon bell. I can't wait t
back after lunch. I fly out after the big box
pack the little boxes in. In my haste and ignor
I bring back covers by mistake and pack doze
little boxes in covers. It must all be done over a
Six hundred boxes I pack this day. I've not sto
for breath. I'm not a bit tired when 6 o'clock c
round. I ask Ida when she will put me on p
work—it seems the great ambition of my life
feel I am on piecework. "When you can pack a
two thousand boxes a day," says Ida. Two t
sand! I was panting and proud over six hun
"Never mind," says Ida, "you're makin' out f
Oh, the thrill of those words! I asked her to
me again about separating the paper cups. I d
have it just right, I was sure. "My Gawd!" si
Ida, "what ambition!" Yes, but the ambitio
not last more than a few days at that pitch.

Tessie wanted to tell me something about her M
to-day so badly, but could not find the English w
Her joy when I said, "Tell me in German"!

came I to speak German? I'd spent three years in Germany with an American family, taking care of the children. Honest for once.

"That was luck for you," says Tessie.

"That was sure luck for me," says I—honest again.

Wherever Lena works there floats conversation for a radius of three tables. The subject matter is ever the same—"dopes." "Is he big? . . . Gee! I say! . . . More like a sister to him. . . . He never sees the letters." "Lena" (from Ida), "shut up and get to work!" . . . "I picked him up Sunday. . . . Where's them waxing papers? . . . Third she vamped in two days. . . . Sure treats a girl swell. . . . Them ain't pineapples. . . ." "Lee-na! get to work or I'll knock the hell out a ya!" And pretty Lena giggles on: "He says. . . . She says to him. . . . Sure my father says if he comes 'round again. . . ."

And Tessie and I; I bend over to hear Tessie's soft, low German as she tells me how good her *Mann* is to her; how he never, never scolds, no matter if she buys a new hat or what; how he brings home all his pay every week and gives it to her. He is such a good *Mann*. They are saving all their money. In two years they will go back near München and buy a little farm.

Tessie and her poor *Mann*, with his broken elbow and his swollen arm all black and blue, couldn't sleep last night. Oh dear! this New York! One man at one corner he talk about Harding, one man other corner he talk about Cox; one man under their window he talk MacSwiney—New York talk, talk, talk!

Looked like rain to-day, but how can a body buy an umbrella appropriate to chocolate packing at thirteen dollars a week when the stores are all closed before work and closed after? I told Lillian my troubles. I asked Lillian if a cheap umbrella could be purchased in the neighborhood.

"Cheap," sniffs Lillian. "I don't know. I got me a nice one—sample though—at Macy's for twelve-fifty." Lillian may take to her bed after supper, but while she is awake she is going to be every inch to the manner born.

By the time I pack the two thousandth box of "assorteds" my soul turns in revolt. "If you give me another 'assorted' to pack," says I to Ida, "I'll lie down here on the floor and die."

"The hell you will," says Ida. But she gets me fancy pound boxes with a top and bottom layer, scarce two candies alike, and Tessie beams on me like a mother with an only child. "That takes the brains!" says Tessie. "Not for me! It gives me the ache in my head to think of it."

Indeed it near gives me the ache in mine. Before the next to the last row is packed the bottom looks completely filled. Where can four fat chocolates in cups find themselves? I push the last row over gently to make room,—three chocolates in the middle rear up and stand on end. Press them gently down and two more on the first row get out of hand. At last the last row is in—only to discover four candies here and there have all sprung their moorings. For each one I press down gently, another some place else acts

up. How long can my patience hold out? Firmly, desperately I press that last obstreperous chocolate down in its place. My finger goes squash through the crusty brown, and pink goo oozes up and out. A fresh strawberry heart must be found. "Ain't no more," announces Fannie. Might just as well tell an artist there is only enough paint for one eye on his beautiful portrait. Of course another chocolate can be substituted. But a strawberry heart was what belonged there!

At last the long rows of boxes are packed, wax paper laid over each—to blow off every time Louie goes by. Then come covers with lovely ladies in low-neck dresses on the tops—and the room so cold, anyhow. Why are all the pictures on all the boxes smiling ladies in scanty attire, instead of wrapped to the ears in fur coats so that a body might find comfort in gazing on them in such a temperature?

Ida comes along and peers in one box. "You can consider yourself a fancy packer now—see?" Harding the night of the election felt less joyous than do I at her words.

This night there is a lecture at the New School for Social Research to be attended. If some of those educated foreigners in our room can go to night school, I guess I can keep up my school. They are all foreigners but Lillian and Sadie and I. Sadie is about the same Indian-summer stage as Lillian and uses even better English. Her eyebrows are also unduly black; her face looks a bit as if she had been trying to get the ring out of the flour with her teeth

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dices. When it comes to the future, no sane soul dare prophesy at all. Thus it is with much which one studies nowadays—we have evolved beyond the era of intellectual surety. What an almighty relief to the soul, then, when one can pack six rows of four chocolates each in a bottom layer, seven rows of four chocolates each in the top, cover them, count them, stack them, pile them in the truck, and away they go. One job *done*—done now and forever. A definite piece of work put behind you—and no one coming along in six months with documents or discoveries or new theories or practices to upset all your labors. I say it is blessed to pack chocolates when one has been studying labor problems for some years. Every professor ought to have a fling at packing chocolates.

Folks wonder why a girl slaves in a factory when she could be earning good money and a home thrown in doing housework. I think of that as I watch Annie. Imagine Annie poking about by her lonesome, saying, "No, ma'm," "Yes, ma'm," "No, sir," "Yes, sir." "Can I go out for a few moments, Mrs. Jones?" "Oh, all right, ma'm!" Annie, whose talk echoes up and down the room all day. She is Annie to every Tom, Dick, and Harry who pokes his nose in our packing room, but they are Tom, Dick, and Harry to her. It is not being called by your first name that makes the rub. It is being called it when you must forever tack on the Mr. and the Mrs. and the Miss. Annie is in awe of no human being. Annie is the fastest packer in the room and draws the most pay. Annie sasses the entire factory. Annie never

stops talking unless she wants to. Which is only now and then when her mother has had a bad spell and Annie gets a bit blue. Little Pauline, an Italian, only a few months in this country, only a few weeks in the factory, works across the table from Annie. Pauline is the next quickest packer in our room. She cannot speak a word of English. Annie gives a sigh audible from one end of the room to the next. "My Gawd!" moans Annie to the entire floor. "If this here Eyetalian don't learn English pretty soon I gotta learn Eyetalian. I can't stand here like a dead one all day with nobody to talk to." Pauline might perhaps be reasoning that, after all, why learn English, since she would never get a silent moment in which to practice any of it.

I very much love little Pauline. All day long her fingers fly; all day long not a word does she speak, only every now and then little Pauline turns around to me and we smile at each other. Once on the street, a block or so from the factory, little Pauline ran up to me, put her arm through mine, and caught my hand. So we walked to work. Neither could say a word to the other. Each just smiled and smiled. For the first time in all my life I really felt the melting pot first hand. To Pauline I was no agent of Americanization, no superior proclaiming the need of bathtubs and clean teeth, no teacher of the "Star-spangled banner" and the Constitution. To Pauline I was a fellow-worker, and she must know, for such things are always known, that I loved her. To myself, I felt suddenly the hostess—the generation-long

inhabitant of this land so new and strange to little Pauline. She was my guest here. I would indeed have her care for my country, have her glad she came to my home. That day Pauline turned around and smiled more often than before.

I finally settled down to eating lunch daily between Tessie and Mrs. Lewis, the Englishwoman. We do so laugh at one another's jokes. I know everything that ever happened to Tessie and Mrs. Lewis from the time they were born; all the heartbreaking stories of the first homesick months in this my land, all the jobs they have labored at. Mrs. Lewis has worked "in the mills" ever since she was born, it would seem, first in England, later in Michigan. Tessie and her husband mostly have hired out together in this country for housework, and she likes that better than packing chocolates standing up, she says. Mrs. Lewis is—well, she's Indian summer, too, along with Lillian and Sadie and Fannie, only she makes no bones about it (nor does black Fannie, for that matter). Mrs. Lewis is thin and wrinkled, with a skimpy little dust cap on her head. Her nose is very long and pointed, her teeth very false. Her eyes are always smiling. She loves to laugh. One day we were talking about unemployment.

"Don't you know, it's awful in Europe," volunteers Mrs. Lewis.

"One hundred thousand unemployed in Paris alone—saw it in headlines this morning," I advance.

"Paris?" said Tessie. "Paris? Where's Paris?"

If one could always be so sure of one's facts.

"France."

Mrs. Lewis wheels about in her chair, looks at me sternly over the top of her spectacles, and:

"Do you know, they're telling me that's a pretty fast country, that France."

"You don't say!" I look interested.

"No—no I haven't got the details *yet*"—she clasped her chin with her hand—"but 'fast' was the word I heard used."

Irene is a large, florid, bleached blonde. She worked at the table behind me about four days. "Y'know"—Irene has a salon air—"y'know, I jus' can't stand steppen on these soft chocolates. Nobody knows how I suffer. It just goes through me like a knife." She spent a good part of each day scraping off the bottoms of her French-heeled shoes with a piece of cardboard. It evidently was too much for her nerves. She is no more.

The sign reads, "Saturdays 8–12." When Saturday came around Ida hollered down the room, "Everybody's gotta work to-day till five." The howl that went up! I supposed "gotta" meant "gotta." But Lena came up to me.

"You gonna work till five? Don't you do it. We had to strike to get a Saturday half holiday. Now they're tellin' us we gotta work till five—pay us for it, o' course. If enough girls 'll stay, pretty soon they 'll be sayin: 'See? What ud we tell ya? The girls want to work Saturday afternoons'; and they 'll have us back regular again." In the end not a girl in our room stayed, and Ida wrung her hands.

Monday next, though, Ida announced, "Everybody's gotta work till seven to-night 'cause ya all went home Saturday afternoon. Three nights a week now you gotta work till seven." To stand from 1 to 7! One girl in the room belonged to some union or other. She called out, "Will they pay time and a half for overtime?" At which everyone broke into laughter. "Gee! Ida, here's a girl wants time and a half!" Tessie, Mrs. Lewis, Sadie, and I refused to work till 7. Ida used threats and argument. "I gotta put down your numbers!" We stood firm—6 o'clock was long enough. "Gee! You don't notice that last hour—goes like a second," argued Ida. We filed out when the 6-o'clock bell rang.

The girls all fuss over the hour off at noon. It takes at best twenty minutes to eat lunch. For the rest of the hour there is no place to go, nothing to do, but sit in the hard chairs at the marble-topped tables in the whitewashed room for half an hour till the bell rings at 12.50, and you can sit on the edge of a truck upstairs for ten minutes longer. They all say they wish to goodness we could have half an hour at noon and get off half an hour earlier at night.

A tragedy the first pay day. I was so excited when that Saturday came round, to see what it would all be like—to get my first pay envelope. About 11.30 two men came in, one carrying a wooden box filled with little envelopes. Girls appear suddenly from every place and crowd around the two men. One calls out a number, the girl takes her envelope and

goes off. I keep working away, thinking you are not supposed to step up till your number is called. But, lo! everyone seems paid off and the men departing, whereat I leave my work with beating heart and announce: "You didn't call 1075." But it seems I was supposed to step up and give 1075. I get handed my little envelope. Connie Parker in one corner, 1075 in the other, the date, and $6.81. Six dollars and eighty-one cents, and I had expected fourteen dollars. (I had told Ida at last that I thought I ought to get fourteen dollars, and she thought so, too, and said she'd "speak to the man" about it.) I clutched Ida—only six dollars and eighty one cents!" "Well, what more do ya want."

"But you said fourteen dollars."

It seems the week goes Thursday to Thursday, instead of Monday to Saturday, so my first pay covered only three days and a deduction for my locker key.

At that moment a little cry just behind me from Louisa. Louisa had been packing with Irene—dark little, frail little Yiddish Louisa; big brawny bleached-blond Irene.

"I've lost my pay envelope!"

Wan little Louisa! She had been talking to Topsy, Fannie's helper. Her envelope had slipped out of her waist, and when she went to pick it up, lo! there was nothing there to pick—fourteen dollars gone! There was excitement for you. Fourteen dollars in Wing 13, Room 3, was equal to fourteen million dollars in Wall Street. Everybody pulled

out boxes and searched, got down on hands and knees and poked, and the rest mauled Louisa from head to foot.

"Sure it ain't in your stocking? Well, look *again*."

"What's this?"—jabbing Louisa's ribs—"this?"

Eight hands going over Louisa's person as if the anguished slip of a girl could not have felt that stiff envelope with fourteen dollars in it herself had it been there. She stood helpless, woebegone.

Ida rose Napoleon-like to the rescue. "I'll search everybody in the room!"

Whereat she made a grab at Topsy and removed her. "They" say Topsy was stripped to the breezes in Ida's fury, but no envelope.

Topsy, be it known, was already a suspicious character. That very week Fannie's purse had disappeared under circumstances pointing to Topsy. Which caused a strained relationship between the two. One day it broke—such relationship as existed.

Fannie up at her end of the boxes was heard to screech down the line to where Topsy was sorting chocolate rolls:

"How dare you talk to me like that?"

"I ain't talkin' to you!"

"You am. You called me names."

"I never. I called you nothin', you ole white nigger."

"You stand lie to me like that and call me names?"

"Who say lie? I ain't no liar. You shut up; you ain't my boss. I'll call you anythin' I please, sassin' me that way!"

"I didn't sassed you. You called me names."

"I don't care what I called you—I know what you *is*." Here Topsy gathered all her strength and shouted up to Fannie, "You're a *heifer*, you is."

Now there is much I do not know about the world, and maybe heifer is a word like some one or two others you are never supposed to set down in so many letters. If so, it is new to me and I apologize. The way Topsy called it, and the way Fannie acted on hearing herself called it, would lead one to believe it is a word never appearing in print.

"You—call—me a *heifer?*" shrieked Fannie. "I'll tell ya landlady on ya, I will!"

"Don' yo' go mixin' up in my private affairs. You shut yo' mouth, yo' hear me? yo' *heifer!*"

"I *ain't* no heifer!"

Fortunately Ida swung into our midst about then and saved folk from bodily injury. A few days later Fanny informed me privately that she don't say nothin' when that nigger starts rowin' with her, but if she jus' has her tin lunch box with her next time when that nigger starts talkin' fresh—callin' her a heifer—*her!*—she'll slug her right 'cross the face with it.

So Topsy was searched. When she got her garments back on she appeared at the door—a small black goddess of fury. "Yo' fresh Ida, yo'—yessa—yo' jus' searched me 'cause I'm black. That's all, 'cause I'm black. Why don't you search all that white trash standin' there?" And Topsy flung herself out. Monday she appeared with a new maroon

embroidered suit. Cost every nickel of thirty-eight dollars, Fannie informed me. In the packing room she had a hat pin in her cap. Some girl heard Topsy tell some other girls she was going stick that pin in Fannie if Fannie got sassin' her again. Ida made her remove the hat pin. In an hour she disappeared altogether and stayed disappeared forever after. "Went South," Fannie told me. "Always said she was goin' South when cold weather started. . . . Huh! Thought she'd stick me with a hat pin. I was carryin' a board around all mornin'. If she so much as come near me I was goin' to give her a crack aside the head."

But there was little Louisa—and no longer could she keep back the tears. Nor could ever the pay envelope be unearthed. Later I found her sitting on the pile of dirty towels in the washroom, sobbing her heart out. It was not so much that the money was gone—that was awful enough—fourteen dollars! —fourteen dollars!—oh-h-h,—but her mother and father—what would they do to her when she came home and told 'em? They mightn't believe it was lost and think she'd spent it on somethin' for herself. The tears streamed down her face. And that was the last we ever saw of Louisa.

Had "local color" been all we were after, perhaps Wing 13, Room 3, would have supplied sufficient of that indefinitely, with the combination of the ever-voluble Lena and the ever-present labor turnover. Even more we desired to learn the industrial feel of

the thing—what do some of the million and more factory women think about the world of work? Remaining longer in Wing 13 would give no deeper clue to that. For all that I could find out, the candy workers there thought nothing about it one way or the other. The younger unmarried girls worked because it seemed the only thing to do—they or their families needed the money, and what would they be doing otherwise? Lena claimed, if she could have her way in the world, she would sleep until 12 every day and go to a show every afternoon. But that life would pall even on Lena, and she giggled wisely when I slangily suggested as much.

The older married women worked either because they had to, since the male breadwinner was disabled (an old fat Irishwoman at the chocolate dipper had a husband with softening of the brain. He was a discharged English soldier who "got too much in the sun in India") or because his tenure of job was apt to be uncertain and they preferred to take no chances. Especially with the feel and talk of unemployment in the air, two jobs were better than none. A few, like Mrs. Lewis, worked to lay by toward their old age. Mrs. Lewis's husband had a job, but his wages permitted of little or no savings. Some of her friends told her: "Oh, well, somebody's bound to look out for you somehow when you get old. They don't let you die of hunger and cold!" But Mrs. Lewis was not so sure. She preferred to save herself from hunger and cold.

Such inconveniences of the job as existed were

taken as being all in the day's work—like the rain or a cold in the head. At some time they must have shown enough ability for temporary organization to strike for the Saturday half holiday. I wish I could have been there when that affair was on. Which girls were the ringleaders? How much agitation and exertion did it take to acquire the momentum which would result in enforcing their demands? Had I entered factory work with any idea of encouraging organization among female factory workers, I should have considered that candy group the most hopeless soil imaginable. Those whom I came in contact with had no class feeling, no ideas of grievances, no ambitions over and above the doing of an uninteresting job with as little exertion as possible.

I hated leaving Tessie and Mrs. Lewis and little Pauline. Already I miss the life behind those candy scenes. For the remainder of my days a box of chocolates will mean a very personal—almost too personal for comfort!—thing to me. But for the rest of the world. . . .

Some place, some moonlight night, some youth, looking like a collar advertisement, will present his fair love with a pound box of fancy assorted chocolates—in brown paper cups; and assured of at least a generous disposition, plus his lovely collar-advertisement hair, she will say yes. On the sofa, side by side, one light dimly shining, the nightingale singing in the sycamore tree beside the front window, their two hearts will beat as one—for the time being.

They will eat the chocolates I packed and life will seem a very sweet and peaceful thing indeed. Nor will any disturbing notion of how my feet felt ever reach them, no jarring "you heifer!" float across the states to where they sit. Louie to them does not exist—Louie, forever on the run with, "*Louie*, move these trays!" "*Louie*, bottoms!" "*Louie*, tops!" "*Louie*, cardboards!" "*Louie*, the truck!" "*Louie*, sweep the floor! How many times I told you that to-day!" "*Louie*, get me a box a' ca'mels, that's a good dope!" "*Louie*, turn out them lights!" "*Louie*, turn on them lights!" "*Louie*, ya leave things settin' round like that!" "*Louie*, where them covers?" and then Louie smashes his fingers and retires for ten minutes.

Nor is Ida more than a strange name to those two on the sofa. No echoes reach them of, "Ida, where them wax papers?" "Ida, where's Fannie?" "Ida, where them picture tops?" "Ida, ain't no more 'coffees.' What 'll I use instead?" "Ida! Where's Ida? Mike wants ya by the elevator." "Ida, I jus' packed sixty; ten sixty-two is my number." "Ida, Joe says they want 'drops' on the fifth." "Ida, ain't no more trays." "Ida, gimme the locker-door key. 'M cold—want ma sweater. (Gee! it 'u'd freeze the stuffin' outa ya in this ice box!)"

Those chocolates appeared in a store window in Watertown, and that's enough. Not for their moonlit souls the clang of the men building a new dipper and roller in our room—the bang of the blows of metal on metal as they pierce your soul along about

5 of a weary afternoon. Lena's giggles and Ida's "Lee-na, stop your talk and go to work! . . . Louie, stop your whistlin'! . . . My Gawd! girls, don' you know no better n' to put two kinds in the same box?" . . . Hey, Lena, this yere Eyetalian wants somethin'; come here and find out what's ailin' her. . . . Fannie, ain't there no more plantations? . . . Who left that door open? . . . Louie, for Gawd's sake how long you gonna take with that truck? . . . Lena, stop your talkin' and go to work. . . ."

And 'round here, there, and every place, "My Gawd! my feet are like ice!" "Say, len' me some of yo'r cardboards—hey?" "You Pearl White [black as night], got the tops down there?" "Hey, Ida, the Hungarian girl wants somethin'. I can't understand her. . . ."

Those two sit on the sofa. The moon shines on the nightingale singing in the sycamore tree. Nor do they ever glimpse a vision of little Italian Pauline's swift fingers dancing over the boxes, nor do they ever guess of wan Louisa's sobs.

II

286 On Brass

SWEETNESS and Light.

So now appears the candy factory in retrospect.

Shall we stumble upon a job yet that will make brass seem as a haven of refuge? Allah forbid!

After all, factory work, more than anything so far, has brought out the fact that life from beginning to end is a matter of comparisons. The factory girl, from my short experience, is not fussing over what her job looks like compared to tea at the Biltmore. She is comparing it with the last job or with home. And it is either slightly better or slightly worse than the last job or home. Any way round, nothing to get excited over. An outsider, soul-filled college graduate with a mission, investigates a factory and calls aloud to Heaven: "Can such things be? Why do women *stay* in such a place?"

The factory girl, if she heard those anguished cries, would as like as not shrug her shoulders and remark: "Ugh! she sh'u'dda seen ——'s factory where I worked a year ago." Or, "Gawd! what does she think a person's goin' to do—sit home all day and scrub the kitchen?"

And yet the fact remains that some things get too

much on even a philosophical factory girl's nerves. Whereat she merely walks out—if she has gumption enough. The labor turnover, from the point of view of production and efficiency, can well be a vital industrial concern. To the factory girl, it saves her life, like as not. Praise be the labor turnover!

If it were not for that same turnover, I, like the soul-filled college graduate, might feel like calling aloud, not to Heaven, but to the President of the United States and Congress and the Church and Women's clubs: "Come quick and rescue females from the brassworks!" As it is, the females rescue themselves. If there's any concern it's "the boss he should worry." He must know how every night girls depart never to cross those portals again, so help them Gawd. Every morning a new handful is broken in, to stay there a week or two, if that long, and take to their heels. Praise be the labor turnover, as long as we have such brassworks.

Before eight o'clock of a cold Monday morning (thank goodness it was not raining, since we stood in shivering groups on the sidewalk) I answered the Sunday-morning "ad":

GIRLS AND WOMEN

between 16 and 36; learners and experienced assemblers and foot-press operators on small brass parts; steady; half day Saturday all year around; good pay and bonus. Apply Superintendent's office.

The first prospects were rather formidable—some fifty men and boys, no other girl or woman. Soon two cold females made their appearance and we

shivered together and got acquainted in five minutes, as is wont under the circumstances. One rawboned girl with a crooked nose and frizzled blond hair had been married just two months. She went into immediate details about a party at her sister-in-law's the night before, all ending at a dance hall. The pretty, plump Jewess admitted she had never danced.

"What?" almost yelled the bride, "Never *danced?* Good Gawd! girl, you might as well be *dead!*"

"You said it!" I chimed in. "Might as well dig a hole in the ground and crawl in it."

"You said it!" and the husky bride and erstwhile (up to the week before) elevator operator at twenty-three dollars a week (she said) gave me a smart thump of understanding. "Girl, you never *danced?* It's—it's the grandest thing in *life!*"

The plump Jewess looked a little out of things. "I know," she sighed, "they tell me it 'u'd make me thin, too, but my folks don't let me go out no place."

Whereat we changed to polishing off profiteers and the high cost of living. The Jewish girl's brother knew we were headin' straight for civil war. "They'll be comin' right in folks' homes and killen 'em before a year's out. See if they don't." I asked her if she'd ever worked in a union shop. "Na, none of that stuff for me! Wouldn't go near a union." Both girls railed over the way people were losing their jobs. Anyhow, the bride was goin' to a dance that night, you jus' bet.

At last some one with a heart came out and told

the girls we could step inside. By that time there were some ten of us, all ages and descriptions. What would a "typical" factory girl be like, I wonder. Statistics prove she is young and unmarried more than otherwise, but each factory does seem to collect the motleyest crew of a little of everything—old, young, married, single, homely, stupid, bright, pretty, sickly, husky, fat, thin, and so on down the line. Certain it is that they who picture a French-heeled, fur-coated, dolled-up creature as the "typical factory girl" are far wide of the mark. The one characteristic which so far does seem pretty universal is that one and all, no matter what the age or looks, are perfectly willing to tell you everything they know on short acquaintance. At first I felt a hesitancy at asking questions about their personal lives, yet I so much wanted to know what they did and thought, what they hoped and dreamed about. It was early apparent that sooner or later everything would come out with scant encouragement, and no amount of questioning ever is taken amiss. They in turn ask me questions, and I lie until I hate myself.

The plump Jewess was the first interviewed. When she heard the pay she departed. The elevator bride and I were taken together, and together we agreed to everything—wages thirteen dollars a week, "with one dollar a week bonus" (the bonus, as was later discovered, had numerous strings to it. I never did get any). Work began at 7.45, half hour for lunch, ended at 5. The bride asked if the work was danger-

ous. "That's up to you. Goin' upstairs is dangerous if you don't watch where you put your feet. Eh?" We wanted to start right in—I had my apron under my arm—but to-morrow would be time. I got quite imploring about beginning on that day. No use.

The bride and I departed with passes to get by with the next morning. That was the last I saw of the bride—or any of that group, except one little frozen thing without a hat. She worked three days, and used to pull my apron every time she went by and grin.

The factory was 'way over on the East Side. It meant gettin' up in the dark and three Subways—West Side, the Shuttle, East Side which could be borne amicably in the morning, but after eight and three-quarter hours of foot-press work, going home with that 5–6 rush—that mob who shoved and elbowed and pushed and jammed—was difficult to bear with Christian spirit. Except that it really is funny. What idea of human nature must a Subway guard between the hours of 5 and 6 be possessed of?

At noon I used to open my lunch anxiously, expecting to see nothing but a doughy mass of crumpled rye bread and jam. Several times on the Subway the apple got shoved into my ribs over a period where it seemed as if either the apple or the ribs would have to give in. But by noon my hunger was such that any state of anything edible was as nectar and ambrosia.

I am thinking that even a hardened factory hand might remember her first day at the brassworks.

Up three flights of stairs, through a part of the men's factory, over a narrow bridge to a back building, through two little bobbing doors, and there you were admitted to that sanctuary where, according to the man who hired you, steady work and advancement to a rosy future awaited one.

True, I had only the candy factory as a basis of comparison, as far as working experience went. But I have been through factories and factories of all sorts and descriptions, and nothing had I ever seen like the brassworks. First was the smell—the stale smell of gas and metal. (Perhaps there is no such smell as stale metal, but you go down to the brassworks and describe it better!) Second, the darkness—a single green-shaded electric light directly over where any girl was working, but there were areas where there were no workers. Up the end of the floor, among the power presses, all belts and machines and whirring wheels, there were only three or four shaded lights. Windows lined both sides of the floor, but they had never been washed since the factory was built, surely. Anyhow, it was dark and rainy outside. The walls once had been white, but were now black. Dim, dirty, uneven boxes containing brass parts filled the spaces between the long tables where the foot presses stood. Third, the noise—the clump of the foot presses, the whirring of the pattern cutters—one sounded ever like a lusty woodpecker with a metal beak pecking on metal; rollings and rumblings from the floor above; jarrings and shakings from below.

Two-thirds of the entire floor was filled with long tables holding the foot presses—tables which years ago were clean and new, tables which now were worn, stained, and uneven, and permanently dirty. On each side of each long table stood five black iron presses, but there seemed to be never more than one or two girls working at a side. Each press performed a different piece of work—cut wick holes, fitted or clamped parts together, shaped the cones, and what not, but with only two general types of operation so far as the foot part went. One type took a long, firm, forward swing on the pedal; the other a short, hard, downward "kick." With the end of the pressure the steel die cut through the thin brass cone, or completed whatever the job was. As the pedal and foot swung back to position the girl removed the brass part, dropping it in a large box at her right. She kept a small bin on the table at the left of the press filled with parts she was to work on. Around the sides of the floor were the table workers—girls adjusting parts by hand, or soldering.

The other third of the floor was taken up with the machine presses, which mostly clicked away cutting patterns in the brass parts to hold the lamp chimney. In a far corner were the steaming, bleaching tubs where dull, grimy brass parts were immersed in several preparations, I don't know what, to emerge at last shining like the noonday sun.

The cold little girl with no hat, a strange, somewhat unsociable, new person, and I stood there waiting one hour. Some one took our names. The

experienced feeling when they asked me where I had worked last and how long was I there, and why did I leave! At the end of an hour the forelady beckoned me—such a neat, sweet person as she was—and I took my initial whack at a foot press. If ever I do run an automobile the edge of first enjoyment is removed. A Rolls-Royce cannot make me feel any more pleased with life than the first ten minutes of that foot press. In ten minutes the job was all done and there I sat for an hour and a half waiting for another. Hard on a person with the foot-press fever. The times and times later I would gratefully have taken any part of that hour and a half to ease my weary soul!

Be it known, if I speak feelingly at times of the weariness of a foot press, that, though nothing as to size, I am a very husky person—perhaps the healthiest of the eight million women in industry! It was a matter of paternal dismay that I arrived in the world female instead of male. What Providence had overlooked, mortal ability would do everything possible to make up for—so argued a disappointed father. From four years of age on I was taught to do everything a boy could or would do; from jumping off cars while they were moving to going up in a balloon. A good part of my life I have played tennis and basketball and hockey, and swum, and climbed mountains, and ridden horseback, and rowed, and fished. I do not know what it is to have an ache or a pain from one end of the year to the other. All of which is mentioned merely because if certain work

taxes my strength, who seldom has known what it is to be weary, what can it do to the average factory worker, often without even a fighting physical chance from birth on?

The jobs on our third floor where the girls and women worked concerned themselves with lamps—the old-fashioned kind, city folks are apt to think. Yet goodness knows we seemed during even my sojourn to make more lamp parts than creation ever had used in the heyday of lamps. Well, all but five per cent of farm women still use kerosene lamps, so the government tells us. Also fat Lizzie informed me, when I asked her who in the world could ever use just them lamp cones I made some one particular day, "Lor', child, they send them lamps all over the world!" She made a majestic sweep with both arms. "Some of 'em goes as far—as far—as *Philadelphia!*" Once we were working on a rush order for fifty thousand lamps of one certain kind. Curiosity got the better of me and I took occasion to see where the boxes were being addressed. It was to a large mail-order house in Chicago.

The first noon whistle—work dropped—a rush for the washroom. Let no one think his hands ever were dirty until he labors at a foot press in a brass-works. Such sticky, grimy, oily, rough blackness never was—and the factory supplies no soap nor towels. You are expected to bring your own—which is all right the second day when you have found it out and come prepared.

The third floor had seemed dark and dismal enough

during the morning; at noon all lights are turned off. Many of the workers went out for lunch, the rest got around in dismal corners, most of them singly, and ate by their machines, on the same hard seats they have been on since a quarter to 8. What a bacchanal festival of color and beauty now appeared the candy-factory whitewashed lunch room with the marble-topped tables! The airy sociability of it! I wandered about with my lunch in my hand, to see what I could see. Up amid the belts and power machines sat one of the girls who began that morning —not the cold, hatless one.

"You gonna stick it out?" she asked me.

"Sure. I guess it's all right."

"Oh gee! Ain't like no place I ever worked yet. Don't catch me standin' this long."

She did stand it four days. Minnie suggested then she stick it out till Christmas. "You'll need the money for Christmas y'know, an' you might not get the next job so easy now."

"Damn Christmas!" was all the new girl had to say to that.

"Sure now," said Irish Minnie, "an' she's takin her chances. It's an awful disgrace y'know, to be gettin' presents when y'ain't got none to give back. Ain't it, now? I'd never take no chances on a job so close to Christmas."

I talked to five girls that noon. None of them had been there longer than a week. None of them planned to stay.

All afternoon I worked the foot press at one job.

My foot-press enthusiasm weakened—four thousand times I "kicked"—two thousand lamp-wick slots I make in the cones. Many of the first five hundred looked a bit sad and chewed at. The "boss" came by and saw that I was not one hundred per cent perfect. He gave me pointers and I did better. Each cone got placed over a slanted form just so; kick, and half the slot is made. Lift the cone up a wee bit, twist it round to an exact position, hold it in place, kick, and the other half is cut. The kick must be a stout kick —bing! down hard, to make a clean job of it. The thing they gave you to sit on! A high, narrow, home-made-looking, wooden stool, the very hardest article of furniture under the blue canopy of heaven. Some of them had little, narrow, straight backs—just boards nailed on behind. All of them were top heavy and fell over if you got off without holding on. By 4.30 standing up at the candy job seemed one of the happiest thoughts on earth. What rosy good old days those were! Dear old candy factory! Happy girls back there bending over the chocolates!

Next sat Louisa, an Italian girl who stuttered, and I had to stop my press to hear her. She stopped hers to talk. She should worry. It's the worst job she ever saw, and for thirteen dollars a week why should she work? She talked to me, kicked a few times, got a drink, kicked, talked, stood up and stretched, kicked, talked, got another drink. She is married, has a baby a year old, another coming in three months. She will stay her week out, then she goes, you bet. Her husband was getting fifty dollars a week in a tailor job—no

work now for t-t-t-two months. He does a little now and then in the b-b-barber business. Oh, but life was high while the going was good! She leaned way over and told me in a hushed, inspired tone, to leave me awestruck, "When we was m-m-married we t-t-took a h-h-h-honeymoon!" I gasped and wanted details. To West Virginia they'd gone for a month. The fare alone, each way, had come to ten dollars apiece, and then they did no work for that month, but lived in a little hotel. Her husband was crazy of her, and she was of him now, but not when she was married. He's very good to her. After dinner every single night they go to a show.

"Every night?"

"Sure, every night, and Sundays two times."

It all sounded truly glowing.

"You married?"

"No."

"Well, don' you do it. Wish I wasn't married. Oh gee! Wish I wasn't married. I'm crazy of my husband, but I wish I wasn't married. See—once you married—pisht!—there you are—stay that way."

I agreed I was in no hurry about matrimony.

"Hurry? Na, no hurry; that's right. The h-h-hurrier you are the b-b-b-badder off you get!"

The next morning the Italian girl was late. The forelady gave her locker to some one else. Such a row! Louisa said: "I got mad, I did. I told her to go to hell. That's only w-w-w-way anybody gets anything in this world—get mad and say you go to h-h-hell. Betcha."

A little later the forelady, when the Italian was on one of her trips after a drink, leaned over and gave me her side of the story. She is such a very nice person, our forelady—quiet, attractive, neat as a pin. Her sister addresses boxes and does clerical work of one sort or another. Two subdued old maids they are; never worked any place but right on our third floor. "Ain't like what it used to be," she told me. "In the old days girls used to work here till they got married. We used to have parties here and, say! they was nice girls in them days. Look at 'em now! Such riffraff! New ones comin' in all the time, new ones worse each time. Riffraff, that's what they are. It sure looks nice to see a girl like you." (What good were the earrings doing?) "We'll make it just as nice here for you as we can." (Oh, how guilty I began to feel!)

She looked around to see if the Italian was about.

"Now you take this Eyetalian girl next to you. Gee! she's some fright. Oughtta heard her this morning. 'Spected me to keep her locker for her when she was late. How'd I know she was comin' back? I gave it to another girl. She comes tearin' at me. 'What the hell you think you're doin'?' she says to me. Now I ain't used to such talk, and I was for puttin' my hat and coat on right then and there and walkin' out. I must say I gotta stand all sorts of things in my job. It's awful what I gotta put up with. I never says nothin' to her. But any girl's a fool 'l talk to a person that way. Shows she's got nothin' up here [knocking her head] or she sure'd

know better than get the forelady down on her like that. Gee! I was mad!"

Louisa returned and Miss Hibber moved on. "Some fright, that forelady," remarked Louisa. That night Louisa departed for good.

The second day I kicked over six thousand times. It seemed a lot when you think of the hard stool. It was a toss between which was the worse, the stool or the air. This afternoon, I was sure it must be 3.30. I looked back at the clock—1.10. It had seemed like two hours of work and it was forty minutes. No ventilation whatever in that whole room—not a crack of air. Wonder if there ever was any since the place was built decades ago. Once Louisa and I became desperate and got Tony to open a window. The forelady had a fit; so did Tillie. Both claimed they'd caught cold.

Tony is the Louis of the brassworks. He is young and very lame—one leg considerably shorter than the other. It makes me miserable to see him packing heavy boxes about. He told me he must get another job or quit. Finally they did put him at a small machine press. So many maimed and halt and decrepit as they employed about the works! Numbers of the workers were past-telling old, several were very lame, one errand boy had a fearfully deformed face, one was cross-eyed. I remarked to Minnie that the boss of the works must have a mighty good heart. Minnie has been working twenty-three years and has had the bloom of admiration for her fellow-beings somewhat worn off in that time.

"Hm!" grunted Minnie. "He gets 'em cheaper that way, I guess."

The elevator man is no relation to the one at the candy factory. He is red faced and grinning, most of his teeth are gone, and he always wears a derby hat over one eye. One morning I was late. He jerked his head and thumb toward the elevator. "Come on, I'll give ya a lift up!" and when we reached our floor, though it was the men's side, "Third Avenue stop!" he called out cheerily, and grinned at the world. He had been there for years. The boss on our floor had been there for years—forty-three, to be exact. Miss Hibber would not tell how many years she had worked there, nor would Tillie. Tillie said she was born there.

If it were only the human element that counted, everyone would stay at the brassworks forever. I feel like a snake in the grass, walking off "on them" when they all were so nice. Nor was it for a moment the "dearie" kind of niceness that made you feel it was orders from above. From our floor boss down, they were people who were born to treat a body square. All the handicaps against them—the work itself, the surroundings, the low pay—had so long been part of their lives, these "higher ups" seemed insensible to the fact that such things were handicaps.

To-day was sunny and the factory not so dark—in fact, part of the time we worked with no electric lights. The crisp early orning air those four blocks from the Subway to the factory—it sent the spring fever through the blood. In the gutter of that dirty

East Side street a dirty East Side man was burning garbage. The smoke curled up lazily. The sun just peeping up over the hospital at the end of the street made slanting shafts through the smoke. As I passed by it suddenly was no longer the East Side of New York City. . . .

> Now the Four Way Lodge is open,
> Now the hunting winds are loose,
> Now the smokes of spring go up to clear the brain. . . .

Breakfast in a cañon by the side of a stream—the odor of pines. . . . The little bobbing doors went to behind me and there I stood in floor three, the stale gas and metal smell . . . the whirs of the belts . . . the jarring of the presses. . . .

Next to me this glorious morning sat a snip of a little thing all in black—so pretty she was, so very pretty. I heard the boss tell her it's not the sort of work she's been used to, she'll find it hard. Is she sure she wants to try it? And in the course of the morning I heard the story of Mame's life.

Mame's husband died three weeks ago. They had been married one month and two days—after waiting three years. Shall I write a story of Mame on the sob-sister order to bring the tears to your eyes? It could easily be done. But not honestly. Little Mame—how could her foot ever reach the press? And when she walked off after a drink, I saw that she was quite lame. A widow only three weeks. She'd never worked before, but there was no money. She lived all alone, wandered out for her meals—no

mother, no father, no sisters or brothers. She cried every night. Her husband had been a traveling salesman—sometimes he made eighty-five dollars a week. They had a six-room apartment and a servant! She'd met him at a dance hall. A girl she was with had dared her to wink at him. Sure she'd do anything anybody dared her to. He came over and asked her what she was after, anyhow. That night he left the girl he'd taken to the dance hall to pilot her own way back to home and mother, and he saw Mame to her room. He was swell and tall. She showed me his picture in a locket around her neck. Meanwhile Mame kicked the foot press about twice every five minutes.

Why had they waited so long to get married? Because of the war. He was afraid he'd be killed and would leave her a widow. "He asked me to promise never to get married again if he did marry me and died. But,"—she leaned over my way—"that only meant if he died during the war, ain't that so? Lookit how long the war was over before he died."

He was awful good to her after they got married. He took her to a show every night—jes swell; and she had given him a swell funeral—you bet she did. The coffin had cost eighty-five dollars—white with real silver handles; and the floral piece she bought—"Gee! What's your name? . . . Connie, you oughtta seen that floral piece!" and Mame laid off work altogether to use her hands the better. It was shaped so, and in the middle was a clock made out of flowers,

with the hands at the very minute and hour he'd died. (He passed away of a headache—very sudden.) Then below, in clay, were two clasped hands—his and hers. "Gee! Connie, you never seen nothin' so swell. Everybody seen it said so."

Once he bought her a white evening dress, low neck, fish-tail train, pearls all over the front—cost him one whole week's salary, eighty-five dollars! She had diamond earrings and jewels worth at least one thousand dollars. She had lovely clothes. Couldn't she just put a black band around the arms and go on wearing them? She took a look at my earrings. Gee! they were swell. She had some green ones herself. Next morning she appeared in her widow's weeds with bright-green earrings at least a quarter of an inch longer than mine.

From the first Mame clung to me morning and night. Usually mornings she threw her arms around me in the dressing room. "Here's my Connie!" I saw myself forced to labor in the brassworks for life because of Mame's need of me. This need seemed more than spiritual. One day her pocketbook with twelve dollars had been stolen in the Subway. I lent her some cash. Another time she left her money at the factory. I lent her the wherewithal to get home with, etc. One day I was not at work. Somehow the other girls all were down on Mame. I have pondered much on that. When it came to the needed collection Mame found it hard pickings. She got a penny from this girl, another from that one, until she had made up a nickel to get home with. Irish Minnie

gave her a sandwich and an apple. The girls all jumped on me: "The way you let that Frenchie work ya! Gee! you believe everything anybody tells ya."

"But," says I, "she's been a widow only three weeks and I'm terrible sorry for her."

"How d'ya know she ever had a husband?" "How d'ya know he's dead?" "How'd ya. . . ."

The skepticism of factory workers appals me. They suspect everybody and everything from the boss down. I believed almost everything about Mame, especially since she paid back all she ever borrowed. No one else in that factory believed a word she said. They couldn't "stand her round."

"How d'ya know she lost her pocketbook?" (Later she advertised and got it back—a doctor's wife found it on the early Subway.)

"Doctor's wife," sniffed Minnie. "Who ever heard of a doctor's wife up at seven o'clock in the mornin'?"

And now I have walked off and left Mame to that assemblage of unbelievers. At least Mame has a tongue of her own she is only too glad of a chance to use. It is meat and drink to Mame to have a man look her way. "Did you see that fella insult me?" and she calls back protective remarks for half a block. Sentiments that usually bring in mention of the entertained youth's mother and sisters, and wind up with allusions to a wife, which if he doesn't possess now, he may some day. Once I stopped with Mame while she and Irene phoned a "fella" of Irene's from a drug-store telephone booth. Such

gigglings and goings on, especially since the "fella" was unknown to Mame at the time. Outside in the store a pompous, unromantic man grew more and more impatient for a turn at that booth. When Mame stepped out he remarked casually that he hoped she felt she'd gotten five cents' worth. The dressing down Mame then and there heaped upon that startled gentleman! Who was he to insult her? I grew uneasy and feared a scene, but the pompous party took hasty refuge in the telephone booth and closed the door. Mame was very satisfied with the impression she must have made. "The fresh old guy!"

Another time Mame sought me out in the factory, her eyes blazing. "Connie, I been insulted, horribly insulted, and I don't see how I can stay in this factory! You know that girl Irene? Irene she says to me, 'Mamie, you plannin' to get married again?'

"'I dunno,' I says to her, 'but if I do it 'll be to some single fella.'

"'Huh!' Irene says to me, 'You won't get no single fella; you'll have to marry a widower with two or three children.' Think of her insultin' me like that! I could 'a' slapped her right in the face!"

I asked Mame one Saturday what she'd be doing Sunday. She sighed. "I'll be spendin' the day at the cemetery, I expect."

Monday morning I asked Mame about Sunday. She'd been to church in the morning (Mame, like most of the girls at the brassworks, was a Catholic),

a show in the afternoon, cabaret for dinner, had danced till 1, and played poker until 4 A.M. "If only my husband was alive," said Mame, "I'd be the happiest girl on earth."

One night Mame's landlady wanted to go out and play poker. She asked Mame to keep her eye and ear out for the safety of the house. Every five minutes Mame thought she heard a burglar or somethin'. "Gee! I hardly slept at all; kep' wakin' up all the time. An' that landlady never got in till six this mornin'!"

"My Gawd!" I exclaimed. "Hope she was lucky after playin' poker that long!"

"She sure was," sighed Mame. "Gee! I jus' wish ya c'u'd see the swell prize she won!—the most beau-teful statue—stands about three feet high—of Our Blessed Lady of the Immaculate Conception."

Mame's friendship could become almost embarrassing. One day she announced she wanted me to marry one of her brothers-in-law. "I got two nice ones and we'll go out some Sunday afternoon and you can have your pick. One's a piano tuner; the other's a detective." I thought offhand the piano tuner sounded a bit more domestic. He was swell, Mame said.

Mame didn't think she'd stay long in the brassworks. It was all right—the boss she thought was sort of stuck on her. Did he have a wife? (The boss, at least sixty years old.) Also Charlie was making eyes at her. (Charlie was French; so was Mame. Charlie knew six words of English. Mame three

words of French. Charlie was sixteen). No, aside from matrimony, Mame was going to train in Bellevue Hospital and earn sixty dollars a week being a children's nurse. She'd heard if you got on the right side of a doctor it was easy, and already a doctor was interested in getting Mame in.

And I've just walked off and left Mame.

Kicked the foot press 7,149 times by the meter to-day and expected to die of weariness. Thumped, thumped, thumped without stopping. As with candy, I got excited about going on piecework. Asked Miss Hibber what the rates were for my job—four and a half cents for one hundred and fifty. Since I had to kick twice for every cone top finished, that would have meant around one dollar fifteen cents for the day. Vanished the piece-rate enthusiasm. Tillie seemed the only girl on our floor doing piecework. Tillie, who "was born there." She was thin and stoop shouldered, wore spectacles, and did her hair according to the pompadour styles of some twenty years ago. The work ain't so bad. Tillie don't mind it. There's just one thing in the world Tillie wants. What's that? "A man!" Evidently Tillie has made no bones of her desire. The men call back kindly to Tillie as she picks her way up the dark stairs in the morning, "Hello there, sweetheart!" That week had been a pretty good one for Tillie—she'd made sixteen dollars forty-nine cents.

"Ain't much, p'raps, one way, but there's jus' this about it, it's steady. They never lay anybody

off here, and there's a lot. You hear these girls 'round here talk about earnin' four, five, six dollars a day. Mebbe they did, but why ain't they gettin' it now? 'Shop closed down,' or, 'They laid us off.' That's it. Add it up over a year and my sixteen forty-nine 'll look big as their thirty dollars to forty dollars a week, see if it don't."

Tillie's old, fat, wheezy mother works on our floor —maybe Tillie really was born there.

One day I decided to see what could be done if I went the limit. Suppose I had a sick mother and a lame brother—a lot of factory girls have. I was on a press where you had to kick four separate times on each piece—small lamp cones, shaped, slot already in. My job was to punch four holes for the brackets to hold the chimney. The day before I had kicked over 10,000 times. This morning I gritted my teeth and started in. Between 10 and 11 I had gotten up to 2,000 kicks an hour. Miss Hibber went by and I asked her what piece rates for that machine were. She said six and one-quarter cents for one hundred and fifty. I did not stop then to do any figuring. Told her rather chestily I could kick 2,000 times an hour. "That all? You ought to do much more than that!" Between 11 and 12 I worked as I had never worked. It was humanly impossible to kick that machine oftener than I did. Never did I let my eyes or thoughts wander. When the whistle blew at 12 I had kicked 2,689. For a moment I figured. It takes about an hour in the morning to get on to the swing. From 11 to 12 was always my best output.

After lunch was invariably deadly. From 12.30 until 2.30 it seemed impossible to get up high speed. That left at best 2.30 to 4 for anything above average effort. From 4 to 5 it was hard again on account of physical weariness. But say I could average 2,500 an hour during the day. That would have brought me in, four kicks to each cone, around two dollars and a quarter a day. The fact of the matter was that after kicking 8,500 times that morning I gave up the ghost as far as that job went. I ached body and soul. By that time I had been on that one job several days and was sick to death of it. Each cone I picked up to punch those four holes in made something rub along my backbone or in the pit of my stomach or in my head—or in all of them at once. Yet the old woman next me had been at her same job for over a week. The last place she'd worked she'd done the identical thing six months—preferred it to changing around. Most of the girls took that attitude. Up to date that is the most amazing thing I have learned from my factory experiences—the difference between my attitude toward a monotonous job, and the average worker's. In practically every case the girl has actually preferred the monotonous job to one with any variety. The muscles in my legs ached so I could almost have shed tears. The day before I had finished at 5 tired out. That morning I had wakened up tired—the only time in my life. I could hardly kick at all the first half hour. There was a gnawing sort of pain between my shoulders. Suppose I really had been on piecework and had to

keep up at that breaking rate, only to begin the next morning still more worn out? My Gawd!

Most of the girls kick with the same leg all the time. I tried changing off now and then. With the four-hole machine, using the left leg meant sitting a little to the right side. Also I tried once using my left hand to give the right a rest. Thus the boss observed me.

"Now see here, m'girl, why don't you do things the way you're taught? That ain't the right way!"

He caught me at the wrong moment. I didn't care whether the earth opened up and swallowed me.

"I know the right way of runnin' this machine good as you do," I fairly glared at him. "I'm sick and tired of doin' it the right way, and if I want to do it wrong awhile for a change I guess I can!"

"You ain't goin' to get ahead in this world if you don't do things *right*, m'girl." And he left me to my fate.

At noon that day the girls got after me. "You're a fool to work the way you do. You never took a drink all this mornin'—jus' sit there kickin', kickin', kickin'. Where d'ya think ya goin' to land? In a coffin, that's where. The boss won't thank ya for killin' yourself on his old foot press, neither. You're jus' a fool, workin' like that." And that's just what I decided. "Lay off now and then." Yes indeed, I was going to lay off now and then.

"I see myself breakin' my neck for thirteen dollars a week," Bella chipped in.

"You said it!" from all the others.

o I kicked over 16,000 times that day and let
go as my final swan song. No more breaking
ords for me. My head thumped, thumped,
mped all that night. After that I strolled up
it for a drink and a gossip or back to a corner
he wash room where two or three were sure to be
atting on some old stairs, fussing over the uni-
se. When the boss was up on the other end of the
r, sometimes I just sat at my machine and did
hing. It hurt something within my soul at first,
my head and hands and legs and feet and neck
general disposition felt considerably better.
unch times suited me exactly at the brassworks,
king me feel I was getting what I was after.
ree of us used to gather around Irish Minnie, put
stools lengthwise on the floor, and squat along
sides. Bella, who'd worked in Detroit for seven
lars a day (her figures), a husky good-looking
son; Rosie, the prettiest little sixteen-year-old
lian girl; and I. Such conversations! One day
y unearthed Harry Thaw and Evelyn Nesbit and
id their past, present, and probable future. We
cussed whether Olive Thomas had really com-
ted suicide or died of an overdose of something.
w many nights a week could a girl dance and
k next day? Minnie was past her dancing days.
'd been married 'most twenty years and was
ting fat and unformed-looking; shuffled about in
air of old white tennis shoes and a pink boudoir
. (No one else wore a cap at the brassworks.)
nnie had worked fifteen years at a power press,

eleven years at her last job. She was getting the generous stipend of fourteen dollars a week (one dollar more than the rest of us). She had earned as much as twenty-five dollars a week in her old job at the tin can company, piecework. Everybody about the factory told her troubles to Minnie, who immediately told them to everybody else. It made for a certain community interest. One morning Minnie would tell me, as I passed her machine, "Rosie 'n' Frank have had a fight." With that cue it was easy to appear intelligent concerning future developments. Frank was one of the machinists, an Italian. Rosie had let him make certain advances—put his arm around her and all that—but she told us one lunch time, "he'd taken advantage of her," so she just sassed him back now. Bella announced Frank was honeying around her. "Well, watch out," Rosie advised, with the air of Bella's greataunt.

As to dancing, Bella's chum in Detroit used to go to a dance every single night and work all day. Sundays she'd go to a show and a dance. Bella tried it one week and had to lay off three days of the next week before she could get back to work. Lost her twenty-one dollars. No more of that for Bella. Just once in a while was enough for her.

They did not talk about "vamping dopes" at the brassworks. Everyone asked you if you were "keepin' company," and talked of fellas and sweethearts and intended husbands. That was the scale. As before, all the married ones invariably advised against matrimony. Irish Minnie told us one lunch

time that it was a bad job, this marrying business. "Of course," she admitted, pulling on a piece of roast pork with her teeth, "my husband ain't what you'd call a *bad* man." That was as far as Minnie cared to go.

Perhaps one reason why the brassworks employed so many crooked and decrepit was as an efficiency measure. The few males who were whole caused so many flutterings among the female hands that it seriously interfered with production. Rosie's real cause for turning Frank down was that she was after Good Lookin'. Good Lookin' would not have been so good lookin' out along the avenue, but in the setting of our third floor he was an Adonis. Rosie worked a power press. I would miss the clank of her machine. There she would be up in the corner of the floor where Good Lookin' worked. Good Lookin' would go for a drink. Rosie would get thirsty that identical moment. They would carry on an animated conversation, to be rudely broken into by a sight of the boss meandering up their way. Rosie would make a dash for her machine, Good Lookin' would saunter over to his.

From the start I had pestered the boss to be allowed on a power press, for two reasons: one just because I wanted to—the same reason why a small boy wants to work at machinery; secondly, I wanted to be able to pose at the next job as an experienced power-press worker and sooner or later get a high-power machine. One day the boss was watching me

at the foot press. "Y'know, m'girl, I think you really got intelligence, blessed if I don't. I'm goin' to push you right ahead. I'll make a machinist out of you yet, see if I don't. You stay right on here and you'll be making big money yet." (Minnie—eleven years in her last job—fourteen dollars a week now.) Anyway, one morning he came up—and that morning foot presses of every description had lost all fascination for me—and he said, "You still want a power press?"

"Bet your life I do!"

And he gave me a power press deserted that morning by one of the boys. Life looked worth living again. All I had to do to work miracles was press ever so lightly a pedal. The main point was to get my foot off it as quick as I got it on, or there was trouble. I wasn't to get my fingers here or there, or "I'd never play the piano in this life." If the belt flew off I wasn't to grab it, or I'd land up at the ceiling. For the rest, I merely clamped a round piece on the top of a nail-like narrow straight piece—the part that turned the lamp wick up and down. Hundreds and thousands of them I made. The monotony did not wear on me there; it was mixed with no physical exertion. I could have stayed on at the brassworks the rest of my life—perhaps.

One night I was waiting at a cold, windy corner on Fifth Avenue for a bus. None came. A green Packard limousine whirled by. The chauffeur waved and pointed up the Avenue. In a flash I thought, now if I really were a factory girl I'd surely jump at

a chance to ride in that green Packard. Up half a block I ran, and climbed in the front seat, as was expected of me. He was a very nice chauffeur. His mistress, "the old lady," was at a party and he was killing time till 11.30. Would I like to ride till then? No, I wanted to get home—had to be up too early for joy riding. Why so early? The factory. And before I realized it there I sat, the factory girl. Immediately he asked me to dinner any night I said. Now I really thought it would be worth doing; no one else I knew had been out to dine with a chauffeur. Where would he take me? What would he talk about? But my nerve failed me. No, I didn't think I'd go. I fussed about for some excuse. I was sort of new in New York—out West, it was different. There you could pick up with anybody, go any place. "Good Gawd! girl," said the chauffeur, earnestly, "don't try that in New York; you'll get in awful trouble!" All through Central Park he gave me advice about New York and the pitfalls it contained for a Westerner. He'd be very careful about me if I'd go out with him, any place I said, and he'd get me home early as I said. But I didn't say. I'd have to think it over. He could telephone to me. No, he couldn't. The lady I lived with was very particular. Well, anyhow, stormy days he'd see to it he'd be down by the factory and bring me home. Would I be dressed just the way I was then? Just the way—green tam and all.

The next day while I thumped out lamp parts I tried to screw my courage up to go out with that

chauffeur. Finally I decided to put it up to the girls. I meandered back to the wash room. There on the old stairs sat Irish Minnie and Annie, fat and ultradignified. They were discussing who the father of the child really was. I breezed in casually.

"Vamped a chauffeur last night."

"Go-an."

"Sure. He asked me to ride home with him an' I did."

"Got in the machine with him?"

"Sure!"

"You *fool!* You young *fool!*"

Goodness! I was unprepared for such comment.

"What did he do to ya?"

"Nothin'. An' he wants me to go to dinner with him. What 'll I say?"

Both pondered. "Sure," said Minnie, "I b'lieve in a girl gettin' all that's comin' to her, but all I want to tell ya is, chauffeurs are a bad lot—the worst, *I* tell ya."

"You said it!" nodded fat Annie, as if years of harrowing experience lay behind her. "He was all right to ya the first time so as to lure you out the next."

"But," says Minnie, "if ya go to dinner with him, don't you go near his machine. Steer clear of machines. Eat all ya can off him, but don't do no ridin'."

"You said it!" again Annie backed her up. Annie was a regular sack slinger. She could have hurled two men off Brooklyn Bridge with one hand. "If

you was as big an' strong as me you c'u'd take 'most any chance. I'd like to see a guy try to pull anythin' on me." I'd like to see him, too.

"Some day"—Minnie wanted to drive her advice home by concrete illustration—"some day a chauffeur 'll hold a handkerchief under your nose with somethin' on it. When ya come to, goodness knows where you'll be."

I began to feel a little as if I'd posed as too innocent.

"You see, out West—" I began.

"My Gawd!"—Minnie waved a hand scornfully —"don't be tryin' to tell me all men are angels out West."

Just then Miss Hibber poked her head in and we suddenly took ourselves out.

"You go easy, now," Minnie whispered after me.

I lacked the nerve, anyhow, and they put on the finishing touches. A bricklayer would not have been so bad. How did I know the chauffeur was not working for a friend of mine? That, later on, would make it more embarrassing for him than me. I should think he would want to wring my neck.

It was about time to find a new job, anyhow. But leaving the brassworks is like stopping a novel in the middle. What about Rosie and good looking Bella and her brother she was trying to rescue from the grip of the poolroom? Mame—Mame and her kaleidoscope romances, insults, and adventures? I just hate walking off and leaving it all. And the boss and Miss Hibber so nice to me about everything.

Before a week is gone Minnie will be telling in an awed voice that she knows what happened. She told me not to go out with that chauffeur. I went, anyhow, and they found my mangled body in the gutter in Yonkers.

III

195 Irons "Family"

HOW long, I wonder, does one study or work at anything before one feels justified in generalizing?

I have been re-reading of late some of the writings of some of the women who at one time or another essayed to experience first hand the life of the working girl. They have a bit dismayed me. Is it exactly fair, what they do? They thought, because they changed their names and wore cheap clothes, that, presto! they were as workers and could pass on to an uninformed reading public the trials of the worker. (Incidentally they were all trials.) I had read in the past those heartrending books and articles and found it ever difficult to hold back the tears. Sometimes they were written by an immigrant, a bona-fide worker. The tragedy of such a life in this business-ridden land of ours tore one's soul.

An educated, cultured individual, used to a life of ease, or easier, if she had wished to make it that, would find the life of the factory worker well-nigh unbearable. An emotional girl longing for the higher things of life would find factory life galling beyond words. It is to be regretted that there are not more

educated and cultured people—that more folk do not long for the higher things of life—that factory work is not galling to everybody. But the fact seems to be, if we dare generalize, that there are a very great many persons in this world who are neither educated nor "cultured" nor filled with spiritual longings. The observation might be made that all such are not confined to the working classes; that the country at large, from Fifth Avenue, New York, to Main Street, Gopher Prairie, to Market Street, San Francisco, is considerably made up of folk who are not educated or "cultured" or of necessity filled with unsatiable longings of the soul.

It is partly due to the fact that only recently—as geologic time is reckoned—we were swinging in trees, yearning probably for little else than a nut to crack, a mate, a shelter of sorts, something of ape company, and now and then a chance for a bit of a scrap. It is partly due to the fact that for the great majority of people, the life they live from the cradle up is not the sort that matures them with a growing ambition or opportunity to experience the "finer" things of life. One point of view would allow that the reason we have so few educated, cultured, and aspiring people is due to a combination of unfortunate circumstances to do with heredity and environment. They would be cultured and spiritual if only. . . .

The other viewpoint argues that the only reason we have as many cultured and spiritual people as we have is due to a fortunate—"lucky"—combination of circumstances to do with heredity and environ-

ment. These more advanced folk would be far fewer in number if it had not happened that. . . .

It is mostly the "educated and cultured" persons who write the more serious books we read and who tell us what they and the rest of the world think and feel and do—or ought to do. The rest of the world never read what they ought to think and feel and do, and go blithely—or otherwise—on their way thinking and feeling and doing—what they please, or as circumstances force them.

After all, the world is a very subjective thing, and what makes life worth living to one person is not necessarily what makes it worth living to another. Certain fundamental things everybody is apt to want: enough to eat (but what a gamut that "enough" can run!); a mate (the range and variety of mates who do seem amply to satisfy one another!); a shelter to retire to nights (what a bore if we all had to live complacently on the Avenue!); children to love and fuss over—but one child does some parents and ten children do others, and some mothers go into a decline if everything is not sterilized twice a day and everybody clean behind the ears, and other mothers get just as much satisfaction out of their young when there is only one toothbrush, if that, for everybody (we are writing from the mother's viewpoint and not the welfare of the offspring); some possessions of one's own, but not all stocks and bonds and a box of jewels in the bank, or a library, or an automobile, or even a house and lot, before peace reigns.

Everyone likes to mingle with his kind now and

then; to some it is subjectively necessary to hire a caterer, to others peanuts suffice. Everyone likes to wonder and ponder and express opinions—a prize fight is sufficient material for some; others prefer metaphysics. Everyone likes to play. Some need box seats at the Midnight Frolic, others a set of second-hand tools, and yet others a game of craps in the kitchen.

No one likes to be hungry, to be weary, to be sick, to be worried over the future, to be lonely, to have his feelings hurt, to lose those near and dear to him, to have too little independence, to get licked in a scrap of any kind, to have no one at all who loves him, to have nothing at all to do. The people of the so-called working class are more apt to be hungry, weary, and sick than the "educated and cultured" and well-to-do. Otherwise there is no one to say—because there is no way it can be found out—that their lives by and large are not so rich, subjectively speaking, as those with one hundred thousand dollars a year, or with Ph. D. degrees.

Most folk in the world are not riotously happy, not because they are poor, or "workers," but because the combination making for riotous happiness—shall we say health, love, enough to do of what one longs to do—is not often found in one individual. The condition of the bedding, of the clothing; the pictures on the wall; the smells in the kitchen—and beyond; the food on the table—have so much, and no more, to do with it. Whether one sorts soiled clothes in a laundry, or reclines on a chaise-longue with thirty-

eight small hand-embroidered and belaced pillows and a pink satin covering, or sits in a library and fusses over Adam Smith, no one of the three is in a position to pass judgment on the satisfaction or lack of satisfaction of the other two.

All of which is something of an impatient retort to those who look at the world through their own eyes and by no means a justification of the *status quo.* And to introduce the statement—which a month ago would have seemed to me incredible—that I have seen and heard as much contentment in a laundry as I have in the drawing-room of a Fifth Avenue mansion or a college sorority house—as much and no more. Which is not arguing that no improvements need ever be made in laundries.

There was one place I was not going to work, and that was a laundry! I had been through laundries, I had read about laundries, and it was too much to ask anyone—if it was not absolutely necessary—to work in a laundry. And yet when the time came, I hated to leave the laundry. I entered the laundry as a martyr. I left with the nickname, honestly come by without a Christian effort, of "Sunbeam." But, oh! I have a large disgust upon me that it takes such untold effort every working day, all over the "civilized," world to keep people "civilized." The labor, and labor, and labor of first getting cloth woven and buttons and thread manufactured and patterns cut and garments made up, and fitted, or not, and then to keep those garments *clean!* We

talk with such superiority of the fact that we wear clothes and heathen savages get along with beads and rushes. For just that some six hundred and fifty thousand people work six days a week doing laundry work alone—not to mention mother at the home washboard—or electric machine. We must be clean, of course, or we would not be civilized, but I do not see why we need be so fearfully sot up about it.

A new Monday morning came along, and I waited from 7.40 to 9.15 in a six-by-nine entry room, with some twenty-five men and women, to answer the advertisement:

GIRLS, OVER 18

with public school education, to learn machine ironing, marking, and assorting linens; no experience necessary; splendid opportunity for right parties; steady positions; hours 8 to 5.30; half day Saturday.

What the idea was of advertising for superior education never became clear. No one was asked how far she had progressed intellectually. I venture to say the majority of girls there had had no more than the rudiments of the three r's. It looked well in print. One of the girls from the brassworks stood first in line. She had tried two jobs since I saw her last. She did not try the laundry at all.

I was third in line. The manager himself interviewed us inside, since the "Welfare Worker" was ill. What experience had I? I was experienced in both foot and power presses. He phoned to the "family" floor—two vacancies. I was signed up as press ironer, family. I wouldn't find it so hard as the

brassworks—in fact, it really wasn't hard at all. He would start me in at fourteen dollars a week, since I was experienced, instead of the usual twelve. At the end of two weeks, if I wasn't earning more than fourteen dollars—it was a piecework system, with fourteen dollars as a minimum—I'd have to go, and make room for some one who could earn more than fourteen dollars.

I wonder if the Welfare Worker would have made the same speech. That manager was a fraud. On our floor, at least, no one had ever been known to earn more than her weekly minimum. He was a smart fraud. Only I asked too many questions upstairs, he would have had me working like a slave to hold my job.

By the time clock, where I was told to wait, stood the woman just ahead of me in the line. She was the first really bitter soul I had run across in factory work. Her husband had been let out of his job, along with all workers in his plant, without notice. After January 1st they might reopen, but at 1914 wages. There was one child in the family. The father had hunted everywhere for work. For one week the mother had searched. She had tried a shoe polish factory; they put her on gluing labels. The smell of the glue made her terribly sick to her stomach—for three days she was forced to stay in bed. Three times she had tried this laundry. Each day, after keeping her waiting in line an hour or so, they had told her to come back the next day. At last she had gotten as far as the time clock. I saw

her several times in the evening line after that; she was doing "pretty well"—"shaking" on the third floor. Her arms nearly dropped off by evening, but she sure was glad of the thirteen dollars a week. Her husband had found nothing.

The third to join our time-clock ranks was a Porto-Rican. She could speak no English at all. They put her at scrubbing floors for twelve dollars a week. About 4 that afternoon she appeared on our floor, all agitated. She needed a Spanish girl there to tell the boss she was leaving. She was one exercised piece of temper when it finally penetrated just what her job was.

"Family" occupied two-thirds of the sixth and top floor—the other third was the "lunch room." Five flights to walk up every morning. But at least there was the lunch room without a step up at noon. And it was worth climbing five flights to have Miss Cross for a forelady. Sooner or later I must run into a disagreeable forelady, for the experience. To hear folks talk, plenty of that kind exist. Miss Cross was glad I was to be on her floor. She told the manager and me she'd noticed me that morning in line and just thought I'd made a good press ironer. Was I Eyetalian?

She gave me the second press from the door, right in front of a window, and a window open at the top. That was joy for me, but let no one think the average factory girl consciously pines for fresh air. Miss Cross ironed the lowers of a pair of pajamas to show me how it was done, then the coat part. While she

was instructing me in such intricacies, she was deftly finding out all she could about my past, present, and future—married or single, age, religion, and so on. And I watched, fascinated, crumpled pajama legs, with one mighty press of the foot, appear as perfect and flawless as on the Christmas morning they were first removed from the holly-decorated box.

"Now you do it."

I took the coat part of a pair of pink pajamas, smoothed one arm a bit by hand as I laid it out on the stationary side of the ironing press, shaped somewhat like a large metal sleeve board. With both hands I gripped the wooden bar on the upper part, all metal but the bar. With one foot I put most of my weight on the large pedal. That locked the hot metal part on the padded, heated, lower half with a bang. A press on the release pedal, the top flew up —too jarringly, if you did not keep hold of the bar with one hand. That ironed one side of one sleeve. Turn the other side, press, release. Do the other sleeve on two sides. Do the shoulders all around—about four presses and releases to that. Another to one side of the front—two if it is for a big fat man. One under the arm, two or three to the back, one under the other arm, one or two to the other half of the front, one, two, or three to the collar, depending on the style. About sixteen clanks pressing down, sixteen releases flying up, to one gentleman's pajama coat. I had the hang of it, and was left alone. Then I combined ironing and seeing what was what. If a garment was very damp—and most of them were—

the press had to be locked several seconds before being released, to dry it out. During those seconds one's eyes were free to wander.

On my left, next the door, worked a colored girl with shell-rimmed spectacles, very friendly, whose name was Irma. Of Irma later. On my right was the most woebegone-looking soul, an Italian widow, Lucia, in deep mourning—husband dead five weeks, with two daughters to support. She could not speak a word of English, and in this country sixteen years. All this I had from the forelady in between her finding out everything there was to know about me. Bless my soul, if Lucia did not perk up the second the forelady left, edge over, and direct a volume of Italian at me. What won't green earrings do! Old Mrs. Reilly called out, "Ach, the poor soul's found a body to talk to at last!" But, alas! Lucia's hope was short lived. "What!" called Mrs. Reilly, "you ain't Eyetalian? Well, you ought to be, now, because you look it, and because there ought to be somebody here for Lucy to talk to!" Lucia was diseased-looking and unkempt-looking and she ironed very badly. Everyone tried to help her out. They instructed her with a flow of English. When Lucia would but shake her head they used the same flow, only much louder, several at once. Then Lucia would mumble to herself for several minutes over her ironing. At times, late in the afternoon, Miss Cross would grow discouraged.

"Don't you understand that when you iron a shirt you put the sleeves over the puffer *first?*"

Lucia would shake her head and shrug her shoulders helplessly. Miss Cross would repeat with vehemence. Then one girl would poke Lucia and point to the puffer—"Puffer! puffer!" Another would hold up a shirt and holler "Shirt! shirt!" and Lucia would nod vaguely. The next shirt she did as all the others—puffer last, which mussed the ironed part—until some one stopped her work and did a whole shirt for Lucia correct, from beginning to end.

Next to Lucia stood Fanny, colored. She was a good-hearted, helpful, young married thing, not overcleanly and not overstrong. That first morning she kept her eye on me and came to my rescue on a new article of apparel every so often. Next to Fanny stood the three puffers for anyone to use—oval-shaped, hot metal forms, for all gathers, whether in sleeves, waists, skirts, or what not. Each girl had a large egg-shaped puffer on her own table as well. Next to the puffers stood the two sewing machines, where Spanish Sarah and colored Hattie darned and mended.

At the side, behind the machines, stood Ida at her press. All the presses were exactly alike. Ida was a joy to my eyes. At first glance she appeared just a colored girl, but Ida was from Trinidad; her skin was like velvet, her accent Spanish. As the room grew hot from the presses and the steam, along about 4, and our feet began to burn and grow weary, I would look at Ida. It was so easy to picture the exact likes of her, not more than a generation or two

ago, squatting under a palm tree with a necklace of teeth, a ring through her nose, tropic breezes playing on that velvet skin. (Please, I know naught of Trinidad or its customs and am only guessing.) And here stood Ida, thumping, thumping on the ironing press, nine hours, lacking ten minutes, a day, on the sixth floor of a laundry in Harlem, that we in Manhattan might be more civilized.

Once she told me she had lost fifteen pounds in this country. "How?"

"Ah, child," she said, "it's tha mother sickness. Don't you ever know it? Back home in Trinidad are my mother, my father, my two little boys. Oh, tha sickness to see them! But what is one to do when you marry a poor man? He must come to this country to find work, and then, after a while, I must come, too."

Behind Ida stood two other colored girls, and at the end press a white girl who started the day after I did. She stayed only five days, and left in disgust —told me she'd never seen such hard work. Beyond the last press were the curtain frames and the large, round padded table for ironing fancy table linen by hand. Then began the lunch tables.

Behind the row of presses by the windows stood the hand ironers who did the fancy work. First came Ella, neat, old, gray-haired, fearfully thin, wrinkled, with a dab of red rouge on each cheek. After all, one really cannot be old if one dabs on rouge before coming to work all day in a laundry. Ella had hand ironed all her life. She had been ten years in her last

job, but the place changed hands. She liked ironing, she said. Ella never talked to anybody, even at lunch time.

Behind Ella ironed Anna Golden, black, who wore striped silk stockings. She always had a bad cold. Most of the girls had colds most of the time—from the steam, they said. Anna had spent two dollars on medicine that week, which left her fourteen dollars. Anna was the one person to use an electric iron. It had newly been installed. The others heated their irons over gas flames. Every so often Miss Cross would call out, "I smell gas!" So did everybody else. After Anna, Lucile, blackest of all and a widow. And then—Mrs. Reilly.

Mrs. Reilly and Hattie were the characters of the sixth floor. Mrs. Reilly was old and fat and Irish. She had stood up hand ironing so long the part of her from the waist up seemed to have settled down into her hips. Eleven years had Mrs. Reilly ironed in our laundry. She was the one pieceworker in the building. In summer she could make from twenty to twenty-five dollars a week, but she claimed she lost a great part of it in winter. She said she was anxious to get on timework. One afternoon I saw Mrs. Reilly iron just two things—the rest of the while, nothing to do, she sat on an old stool with her eyes closed.

The first afternoon, Mrs. Reilly edged over to me on pretext of ironing out a bit of something on my press.

"An' how are you makin' out?"

"All right, only my feet are awful tired. Don't your feet never get tired?"

"Shure, child, an' what good would it do for my feet to get tired when they're all I got to stand on? An' did you ever try settin' nine hours a day? Shure an' that would be the death of anybody."

Mrs. Reilly's indoor sport was marrying the sixth floor off. Poor Lucia's widow's weeds of five weeks were no obstacle to Mrs. Reilly. She frequently made the whole floor giggle, carrying on an animated Irish conversation with Lucia over the prospects of a second marriage—or rather, a monologue it was, since Lucia never knew she was being talked to. If ever there was a body with a "sex complex" it was old Mrs. Reilly! When I asked her once why she didn't get busy marrying off herself, she called back: "The Lord be praised! And didn't I get more than enough of the one man I had?"

At least twice a week Mrs. Reilly saw a ghost, and she would tell us about it in the morning. She laughed then, and we all laughed, but you could easily picture the poor old fearful soul meeting that inevitable 2 A.M. guest, quaking over it in her lonely bed. Once the ghost was extra terrifying. "It may have been the banama sauce," admitted Mrs. Reilly. And Mrs. Reilly's feet did hurt often. She used sometimes to take off her worn shoes and try tying her feet up in cardboards.

The other workers on our floor were Mabel and Mary, two colored girls who finished off slight rough edges in the press ironing and folded everything;

Edna, a Cuban girl who did handkerchiefs on the mangle; Annie, the English girl, lately married to an American. She had an inclosure of shelves to work in and there she did the final sorting and wrapping of family wash. Annie was the most superior person on our floor.

And Miss Cross. In face, form, neatness, and manners Miss Cross could have held her own socially anywhere. But according to orthodox standards Miss Cross's grammar was faulty. She had worked always in our laundry, beginning as a hand ironer. She knew the days when hours were longer than nine and pay lower than fourteen dollars a week. She remembered when the family floor had to iron Saturdays until 10 and 11 at night, instead of getting off at 12.45, as we did now. They stood it in those days; but how? As it was now, not a girl on our floor but whose feet ached more or less by 4 or 4.30. Ordinarily we stopped at 5.30. Everyone knew how everyone else felt that last half hour. During a week with any holiday the girls had to work till 6.15 every night, and Saturday afternoon. They all said—we discussed it early one morning—that in such weeks they could iron scarcely anything that last hour, their feet burned so.

The candy factory was hard—one stood nine hours, but the work was very light.

The brassworks was hard—one sat, but the foot exercise was wearying and the seat fearfully uncomfortable.

Ironing was hardest—one stood all day and used

the feet for hard pressure besides. Yet I was sorry to leave the laundry!

Perhaps it was just as well for me that Lucia could not talk English. She might have used it on me, and already the left ear was talked off by Irma. Miss Cross stood for just so much conversation, according to her mood. Even if she were feeling very spry, our sixth-floor talk could become only so general and lively before Miss Cross would call: "Girls! girls! not so much noise!" If it were late in the afternoon that would quiet us for the day—no one had enough energy to start up again.

The first half hour Irma confided in me that she had cravings. "Cravings? Cravings for what?" I asked her.

"Cravings for papers."

It sounded a trifle goatlike.

"Papers?"

"Yes, papers. I want to read papers on the lecture platform."

Whereat I heard all Irma's spiritual longings—cravings. She began in school to do papers. That was two years ago. Since then she has often been asked to read the papers she wrote in school before church audiences. Just last Sunday she read one at her church in New York, and four people asked her afterward for copies.

What was it about?

It was about the True Woman. When she wrote it, she began, "Dear Teacher, Pupils, and Friends." But when she read it in churches she skipped the

Teacher and Pupils and began: "Dear Friends, . . . now we are met together on this memorable occasion to consider the subject of the True Woman. First we must ask" (here Irma bangs down on a helpless nightshirt and dries it out well beyond its time into a nice bunch of wrinkles) "What is woman? Woman was created by God because Dear Friends God saw how lonely man was and how lonesome and so out of man's ribs God created woman to be man's company and helpmate. . . ."

"Irma!" Miss Cross's voice had an oft-repeated tone to it. She called out from the table where she checked over each girl's work without so much as turning her head. "You ironed only one leg of these pajamas!"

Irma shuffled over on her crooked high heels and returned with the half-done pajamas. "That fo'-lady!" sighed Irma, "she sure gets on ma nerves. She's always hollerin' at me 'bout somethin'. She never hollers at the other girls that way—she just picks on me."

And Irma continued with the True Woman: "There's another thing the True Woman should have and that's a good character. . . ."

"Irma!" (slight impatience in Miss Cross's tone) "you ironed this nightgown on the wrong side!"

Irma looked appealingly at me. "There she goes again. She makes me downright nervous, that fo'-lady does."

Poor, persecuted Irma!

During that first morning Irma had to iron over

at least six things. Then they looked like distraction. I thought of the manager's introductory speech to me—how after two weeks I might have to make way for a more efficient person.

"How long you been here?" I asked Irma.

"Four months."

"What you makin'?"

"Thirteen a week."

"Ever get extra?"

"Na."

Suspicions concerning the manager.

Irma had three other papers. One was on Testing Time. What was Testing Time? It might concern chemical tubes. It might be a bit of romance. And she really meant Trysting Time. No, to everybody a time comes when he or she must make a great decision. It was about that.

"Irma! you've got your foot in the middle of that white apron!"

Another paper was on Etee-quette (q pronounced).

"Irma! you creased one of these pajama legs down the middle! Do it over."

I pondered much during my laundry days as to why they kept Irma. She told me she first worked down on the shirt-and-collar floor and used to do "one hundred and ten shirts an hour," but the boss got down on her. It took her sometimes three-quarters of an hour to do one boy's shirt on our floor, and then one half the time she had it to do over. Her ironing was beyond all words fearful to behold (there must be an Irma in every laundry). She was

all-mannered slow. She forgot to tag her work. She hung it over her horse so that cuffs and apron strings were always on the floor. Often she was late. Sometimes Miss Cross would grow desperate—but there Irma remained. Below, in that little entryway, were girls waiting for jobs. Did they figure that on the whole Irma wrecked fewer garments than the average new girl, or what? And the manager had tried to scare me!

The noon bell rings—we dash for the lunch-room line. You can purchase pies and soup and fruit, hash and stew, coffee and tea, cafeteria style. There are only two women to serve—the girls from the lower floors have to stand long in line. I do not know where to sit, and by mistake evidently get at a wrong table. No one talks to me. I surely feel I am not where I belong. The next day I get at another wrong table. It is so very evident I am not wanted where I am. Rather disconcerting. I sit and ponder. I had thought factory girls so much more friendly to one another on short acquaintance than "cultured" people. But it is merely that they are more natural. When they feel friendly they show it with no reserves. When they do not feel friendly they show that without reserve. Which is where the unnaturalness of "cultured" folk sometimes helps.

It seems etee-quette at the laundry requires each girl sit at the table where her floor sits. That second day I was at the shirt-and-collar table, and they, I was afterward told, are particularly exclusive. Indeed they are.

At 12.45 the second bell rings. Miss Cross calls out, "All right, girls!" Clank, the presses begin again, and all afternoon I iron gentlemen's underpinnings. During the course of my days in the laundry I iron three sets round for every man in New York and thereby acquire a domestic attitude toward the entire male sex in the radius sending wash to our laundry. Nobody loves a fat man. But their underclothes do fit more easily over the press.

I iron and I iron and I iron, and along about 4.30 the first afternoon it occurs to my cynical soul to wonder what the women are doing with themselves with the spare time which is theirs, because I am thumping that press down eight hours and fifty minutes a day. Not that it is any of my business.

Also along about five o'clock it irritates me to have to bother with what seems to me futile work. I am perfectly willing to take great pains with a white waistcoat—in one day I learn to make a work of art of that. But why need one fuss over the back of a nightshirt? Will a man sleep any better for a wrinkle more or less? Besides, so soon it is all wrinkles.

The second day I iron soft work all morning—forever men's underclothes, pajamas, and nightshirts. Later, when I am promoted to starched work, I tend to grow antifeminist. Why can men live and move and have their beings satisfactorily incased in soft garments, easy to iron, comfortable to wear, and why must women have everything starched and trying on the soul to do up? One minute you iron a soft nightshirt; the next a nightgown starched like a

board, and the worst thing to get through with before it dries too much that ever appears in a laundry.

After lunch I am promoted to hospital work. All afternoon I iron doctors' and interns' white coats and trousers. It is more interesting doing that. But a bit hard on the soul. For it makes you think of sickness and suffering. Yet sickness and suffering white-coated men relieve. It makes you think, too, of having babies—that being all you know of hospitals personally. But on such an occasion you never noticed if the doctor had on a white coat or not, and surely spent no time pondering over who ironed it. Yet if a doctor wore a coat Irma ironed I think the woman would note it even in the last anguished moments of labor.

Irma did an officer's summer uniform once. I do wish I could have heard him when he undid the package. While Irma was pounding down on it she was discoursing to me how, besides papers, she had cravings for poetry.

"You remember that last snowstorm? I sat at my window and I wrote:

"Oh, beautiful snow
When will you go?
Not until spring,
When the birds sing."

There were several other stanzas. And about then Miss Cross dumped a bundle of damp clothes into Irma's box and said, "Iron these next and do them

decent!" I peered suspiciously into the box. It was my own family laundry!

"Hey, Irma," I said, cannily, "leave me do this batch, eh?"

I might as well be paying myself for doing up my own wash, and it would look considerably better than if Irma ironed it.

The third day my feet are not so weary, and while I iron I mull over ideas on women in industry. After all, have not some of us with the good of labor at heart been a bit too theoretical? Take the welfare idea so scoffed at by many. After all, there is more to be said for than against. Of course, provided— It is all very well to say labor should be allowed to look after itself, and none of this paternalism. Of course, the paternalism can be overdone and unwisely done. But, at least where women workers are concerned, if we are going to wait till they are able to do things for themselves we are going to wait, perhaps, too long for the social good while we are airing our theories. It is something like saying that children would be better off and have more strength of character if they learned to look after themselves. But you can start that theory too young and have the child die on your hands, or turn into a gutter waif. The child needs entire looking after up to a point where he can begin little by little to look after himself. And after he has learned to dress himself it does not necessarily mean he can select his own food, his hour of retiring, his habits of cleanliness and hygiene.

I look about at the laundry workers and think:

Suppose we decide nothing shall be done for these girls until they demand it themselves and then have charge of it themselves. In other words, suppose we let welfare work and social legislation wait on organization. The people who talk that way are often college professors or the upper crust of labor. They have either had no touch or lost touch with the rank and file of women workers. It is going to be years and years and years, if ever, before women in this country organize by and large to a point where they can become permanently effective. What organization demands more than any other factor is, first, a sense of oppression; second, surplus energy. Women have been used to getting more or less the tag end of things for some thousands of years. Why expect them suddenly, in a second of time, as it were, to rear up and say, "We'll not stand for this and that"? If we are going to wait for working women to feel oppressed enough to weld themselves together into a militant class organization, capable of demanding certain conditions and getting them, we shall wait many a long day. In the meantime, we are putting off the very situation we hope for—when women, as well as men, shall have reached the point where they can play a dignified part in the industrial scheme of things—by sending them from work at night too weary and run down to exert themselves for any social purpose. I say that anything and everything which can be done to make women more capable of responsibility should be done. But the quickest and sanest way to bring that about is not to sit back and

wait for factory women to work out their own salvation. Too few of them have the intelligence or gumption to have the least idea how to go about it, did it ever occur to them that things might be radically improved. (And the pity of it is that so often telling improvements could be made with so little effort.)

Nor is it anything but feminist sentimentality, as far as I can see, to argue against special legislation for women. What women can do intellectually as compared with men I am in no position to state. To argue that women can take a place on a physical equality with man is simply not being honest. Without sentimentalizing over motherhood, it seems allowable to point out the fact that women are potential mothers, and this fact, with every detail of its complexities, feminists or no to the contrary, is a distinct handicap to women's playing a part in the industrial field on a par with man. And society pays more dearly for a weary woman than for a tired man.

Therefore, why not lunch rooms, and attractive lunch rooms, and good food, well cooked? Yes, it is good business, and besides it puts a woman on a much more efficient level to herself and society. At our tables the girls were talking about different lunch-room conditions they had come across in their work. One girl told of a glass company she had worked for that recently was forced to shut down. She dwelt feelingly on the white lunch room and the good food, and especially the paper napkins—the

only place she had worked where they gave napkins. She claimed there was not a girl who did not want to cry when she had to quit that factory. "Everybody loved it," she said. I tried to find out if she felt the management had been paying for the polished brass rails, the good food, and the napkins out of the workers' wages. "Not on your life!" she answered. She had been a file clerk.

Take dental clinics in the factories. Four teeth on our floor were extracted while I was at the laundry. For a couple of days each girl moaned and groaned and made everybody near her miserable. Then she got Miss Cross's permission to go to some quack dentist, and out came the tooth. Irma had two out at one dollar each. It was going to cost her forty dollars to get them back in. A person with his or her teeth in good condition is a far better citizen than one suffering from the toothache.

If I had my way I should like to see a rest room in every factory where women are employed, and some time, however short, allowed in the middle of the afternoon to make use of it.

Eight hours is long enough for any woman to do sustained physical work, with no possibility for overtime.

Nor have we so much as touched on what it means to live on thirteen dollars or fourteen dollars a week.

"But then you have taken away all the arguments for organization!"

Should organization be considered as an end in and of itself, or as one possible means to an end?

Word was passed this morning that "company" was coming! The bustling and the hustling and the dusting! Every girl had to clean her press from top to bottom, and we swept the floor with lightning speed. Miss Cross dashed to her little mirror and put powder on her nose. Hattie tied a curtain around her head to look like a Red Cross nurse. Every time the door opened we all got expectant palpitations. We were not allowed to speak, yet ever and anon Hattie or Mrs. Reilly would let out some timely remarks. Whereat we all got the giggles. Miss Cross would almost hiss, "GIRLS!" whereat we subsided. It was nerve wracking. And the company never came! They got as far as the third floor and gave out. But it was not until afternoon that we knew definitely that our agony was for naught.

Lucia's machine got out of order—steam escaped at a fearful rate. While the mechanic was fixing it he discoursed to me on the laundry. He had been there nine months—big, capable-looking six-footer. Out of the corner of his mouth he informed me, "Once anybody comes to work here they never leave!" It surely does seem as if they had no end of people who had worked there years and years. Miss Cross says they used to have more fun than nowadays, before so many colored girls were employed. They gave parties and dances and everyone was chummy with everyone else.

To-day, in the midst of hilarity and all unannounced, "company" did appear. We subsided like a schoolroom when the teacher suddenly re-enters.

A batch of women, escorted by one of the management. He gesticulated and explained. I could not catch his words, for the noise of the presses, though goodness knows I craned my ears. They investigated everything. Undoubtedly their guide dwelt eloquently on the victrola in the lunch room; it plays every noon. On their way out two of the young women stopped by my press. "Didn't this girl iron that nightgown nicely?" one said to the other. I felt it obligatory to give them the "once over."

The second the door was closed I dashed for Miss Cross. "Who were them females?" I asked her.

Miss Cross grunted. "Them were Teachers College girls." She wrinkled her nose. "They send 'em over here often. And let me tell *you*, I never seen *one* of 'em with any class *yet*. . . . They talk about college girls—pooh! I never seen a college girl yet looked any classier than us laundry girls. Most of 'em don't look *as* classy. Only difference is, if you mixed us all up, they're gettin' educated."

One of my erstwhile jobs at the University of California had been piloting college girls around through factories in just that fashion. I had to laugh in my sleeve as I suspected the same remarks may have been passed on us after our departure!

We have much fun at our lunch table. A switchboard operator and file clerk from the office eats with us. She and I "guy" each other a good deal during the meal. Miss Cross wipes her eyes and sighs:

"Gee! Ain't it fun to laugh!" and Eleanor and I look pleased with ourselves.

In the paper this morning appeared a picture of one of New York's leading society women "experiencing the life of the working girl first hand." She was shown in a French bonnet, a bunch of orchids at her waist, standing behind a perfumery counter. What our table did to Mrs. X!

"These women," fusses Miss Cross, "who think they'll learn what it's like to be a working girl, and stand behind a perfumery counter! Somebody's always trying to find out what it's like to be a worker —and then they get a lot of noteriety writin' articles about it. All rot, I say. Pity, if they really want to know what workin's like, they wouldn't try a laundry."

"She couldn't eat her breakfast in bed if she did that!" was my cutting remark.

"Or quit at three," from Annie.

"Hisst!" I whisper, "I'm a lady in disguise!" And I quirk my little finger as I drink my coffee and order Eleanor to peer without to see if my limousine waits.

We discuss rich folk and society ladies, and no one envies or is bitter. Miss Cross guesses some of them think they get as weary flying around to their parties and trying on clothes as we do in the laundry. I guess she is partly right.

Then we discuss what a bore it would be not to work. At our table sit Miss Cross, Edna (Miss Cross calls her Edner), the Cuban girl, who refused to eat

with the colored girls; Annie, the English girl, who had worked in a retail shoe shop in London; Mrs. Reilly, who is always morose at lunch and never speaks, except one day when she and Miss Cross nearly came to blows over religion. Each got purple in the face. Then it came out that there was a feud between them—two years or more it had lasted—and neither ever speaks to the other. (Yet Mrs. Reilly gave one dollar, twice as much as the rest of us, toward Miss Cross's Christmas present.) Then there are three girls from the office downstairs. Everyone there had had some experience in being out of work or not working. To each of them at such a time life has been a wearisome thing. Each declared she would 'most rather work at any old thing than stay home and do nothing.

Between the first and second bells after lunch the sixth-floor girls foregather and sit on the ironing tables, swing our heels, and pass the time of day. To-day I start casually singing, "Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam." Everyone on our floor knows the song and there the whole lot of us sit, swinging our heels, singing at the top of our lungs, "A *sunbeam*, a *sunbeam*, Jesus wants me for a *sunbeam*," which is how I got the name of "Sunbeam" on our floor. Except that Miss Cross, for some reason of her own, usually called me "Constance."

I teach them "My Heart's a Little Bird Cage," and we add that to our repertoire. Then we go on to "Nearer, My God, to Thee," "Lead, Kindly Light," "Rock of Ages."

not look particularly hymny. The fact was, I had not thought of most of the hymns our sixth floor sang since I was knee high. In those long ago days a religious grandmother took me once to a Methodist summer camp meeting, at which time I resolved before my Maker to join the Salvation Army and beat a tambourine. So when Miss Cross asked me how I knew so many hymns, and the negro-revivalist variety, I answered that I once near joined the Salvation Army. "You don't say!" said the amazed Miss Cross.

One day Miss Cross and Jacobs, a Jew who bossed some department which brought him often to our floor, to see, for instance, should they wash more curtains or do furniture covers, had a great set-to on the subject of religion. Jacobs was an iconoclast. Edna left her handkerchiefs to join in. I eavesdropped visibly. Jacobs 'lowed there was no hell. Whereat Miss Cross and Edna wanted to know the sense of being good. Jacobs 'lowed there was no such thing as a soul. Miss Cross and Edna fairly clutched each other.

"Then what is there that makes you happy or unhappy, if it ain't your soul?" asked Miss Cross, clenchingly.

"Oh, hell!" grunted Jacobs, impatiently, after having just argued there was no such place.

Jacobs uttered much heresy. Miss Cross and Edna perspired in anguish. Then I openly joined the group.

Miss Cross turned to me. "I tell you how I feel about Christianity. If a lot of these educated college

professors and lawyers and people like that, when they read all the books they do and are smart as they are—if Christianity is good enough for them, it's good enough for me!"

Jacobs was so disgusted that he left.

Whereat Edna freed her soul of all the things she wanted to say about hell and punishment for sins. She went too far for Miss Cross. Edna spoke of thieves and murderers and evildoers in general, and what they ought to get in both this world and the next. Quite a group had collected by this time.

Then Miss Cross turned to us all and said: "We're in no position to pass judgment on people that do wrong. Look at us. Here we are, girls what have everything. We got nice homes, enough to eat and wear, we have 'most everything in the world we want. We don't know what it's like to be tempted, 'cause we're so fortunate. An' I say we shouldn't talk about people who go wrong."

That—in a laundry.

And only Edna seemed not to agree.

To-day at lunch the subject got around to matrimony. Eleanor said: "Any girl can get married, if she wants to so bad she'll take any old thing, but who wants to take any old thing?"

"Sure," I added, cockily. "Who wants to pick up with anyone they can vamp in the Subway?"

Whereupon I get sat upon and the line of argument was interesting. Thus it ran:

After all, why wasn't a man a girl vamped in the

Subway the safest kind? Where did working girls get a chance to meet men, anyhow? About the only place was the dance hall, and goodness knows what kind of men you did meet at a dance hall. They were apt to be the kind to make questionable husbands; like as not they were "sports." But the Subway! Now there you were more likely to pick up with the dependable kind. Every girl at the table knew one or several married couples whose romances had begun on the Subway, and "every one of 'em turned out happy." One girl told of a man she could have vamped the Sunday before in the Subway, but he was too sportily dressed and she got scared and quit in the middle. The other girls all approved her conduct. Each expressed deep suspicion of the "sporty" man. Each supported the Subway romance.

I withdrew my slur on the same.

A guilty feeling came over me as the day for leaving the laundry approached. Miss Cross and I had become very friendly. We planned to do all sorts of things together. Our floor was such a companionable, sociable place. It didn't seem square to walk off and leave those girls, black and white, who were my friends. In the other factories I just disappeared as suddenly as I came. After a few days I could not stand it and penned a jiggly note to Miss Cross. Unexpectedly, I was going to have to move to Pennsylvania (that was true, for Christmas vacation). I hated to leave her and the girls, etc., etc. I was her loving friend, "Constance," alias "Sunbeam."

IV

In a Dress Factory

FINGERS poke through cold holes in the wool mittens; the old coat with two buttons gone flaps and blows about the knees; dirt, old papers, spiral upward on the chill gusts of a raw winter day. Close your eyes, duck your head, and hurry on. Under one arm is clutched the paper bag with lunch and the blue-checked apron. Under the other the old brown-leather bag. In the old brown-leather bag is an old black purse. In the old black purse are fifty-five cents, a key, and a safety pin. In the old brown bag are also two sticks of Black Jack chewing gum, a frayed handkerchief, and the crumpled list of possibilities. If you should lose the list!

That list was copied from the Sunday *World*—from the "Female Help Wanted, Miscellaneous." The future looked bright Sunday. Now after four attempts to land jobs had ended in being turned down cold, the future did not look bright at all. Because, you understand, we are going on the assumption that the old black purse in the old brown bag with fifty-five cents and a key and a safety pin were all that stood between us and—well, a number of dismal things. Which was fifty-five cents and a

key and a safety pin more than some folk had that Monday morning in New York.

You must know in days of unemployment that it is something of a catastrophe if you do not land the first job you apply for Monday morning. For by the time you reach the second place on the list, no matter how fast you go, it is apt to be filled up from the group who were waiting there from 7.30 on, as you had waited at your first hope. The third chance is slimmer still by far, and if you keep on until 10 or 11 it is mostly just plain useless.

And if you do not land a job Monday, that whole week is as good as lost. Of course, there is always a chance—the smallest sort of hopeless chance—that something can be found later on in the week. The general happening is that you stake your all on the 7.30 to 8.30 wait Monday morning. Often it is 9 before the firm sees fit to announce it wants no more help, and there you are with fifty-five cents and a key and a safety pin—or less—to do till Monday next.

Strange the cruel comfort to be felt from the sight of the countless others hurrying about hopelessly, hopefully, that raw Monday morning. On every block where a firm had advertised were girls scanning their already worn-looking lists, making sure of the address, hastening on. Nor were they deterred by the procession marching away—even if some one called, "No use goin' up there—they don't want no more." Perhaps, after all, thought each girl to herself, the boss would want *her*. The boss did not.

First, early in the morning and full of anticipation

I made for the bindery on West Eighteenth Street. That sounded the likeliest of the possibilities. No need to get out the paper to make sure again of the number. It must be where that crowd was on the sidewalk ahead, some thirty girls and as many men and boys. Everyone was pretty cheerful—it was twenty minutes to eight and most of us were young. Rather too many wanted the same job, but there were no worries to speak of. Others might be unlucky—not we. So our little group talked. Bright girls they were, full of giggles and "gee's." Finally the prettiest and the brightest of the lot peered in through the street doors. "Say, w'at d'ye know? I see a bunch inside! Come on!"

In we shoved our way, and there in the dismal basement-like first floor waited as many girls and men as on the sidewalk. "Good night! A fat show those dead ones outside stand!" And we passed the time of day a bit longer. The pretty and smart one was not for such tactics long. "W'at d'ye say we go up to where the firm is and beat the rest of 'em to it!" "You said it!" And we tore up the iron stairs. On the second flight we passed a janitor. "Where's the bindery?"

"Eighth floor."

"My Gawd!" And up seven flights we puffed in single file, conversation impossible for lack of wind.

The bright one opened the door and our group of nine surged in. There stood as many girls and men as were down on the first floor and out on the sidewalk.

"My Gawd!" There was nothing else to say.

We edged our way through till we stood by the time clock. The bright one was right,—that was the strategic point. For at 8.30 a forelady appeared at that very spot, just suddenly was—and in a pleasant tone of voice announced, "We don't need any more help, male or female, this morning!" Two scared-looking girls just in front of me screwed up their courage and said, pleadingly, "But you told us Saturday we should come back this morning and you promised us work!"

"Oh, all right! Then you two go to the coat room."

Everyone looked a bit dazed. At least one hundred girls and over that many men had hopes of landing a job at that bindery—and they took on two girls from Saturday.

We said a few things we thought, and dashed for the iron stairs. We rushed down pell-mell, calling all the way. By this time a steady procession was filing up. "No use. Save your breath." Some kept on, regardless.

From the bindery I rushed to a factory making muslin underwear. By the time I got there—only six blocks uptown—the boss looked incredulous that I should even be applying at such an advanced hour, although it was not yet 9. No, he needed no more. From there to the address of an "ad" for "light factory work," whatever it might turn out to be. A steady stream of girls coming and going. Upstairs a young woman, without turning her head,

her finger tracing down a column of figures, called out, "No more help wanted!"

A rush to a wholesale millinery just off Fifth Avenue—the only millinery advertising for learners. The elevator was packed going up, the hallway was packed where we got out. The girls already there told us newcomers we must write our names on certain cards. Also we must state our last position, what sort of millinery jobs we expected to get, and what salary. The girl ahead of me wrote twenty-eight dollars. I wrote fourteen dollars. She must have been experienced in some branch of the trade. All the rest of us at our crowded end of the entry hall were learners. The "ad" here had read "apply after 9.30." It was not yet 9.30. A few moments after I got there, my card just filled out, the boss called from a little window: "No more learners. All I want is one experienced copyist." There was apparently but one experienced copyist in the whole lot. Everyone was indignant. Several girls spoke up: "What made you advertise learners if you don't want none?" "I did want some, but I got all I want." We stuffed the elevator and went on down.

As a last try, my lunch and apron and I tore for the Subway and Park Place, down by the Woolworth Building. By the time I reached that bindery there were only two girls ahead of me. A man interviewed the younger. She had had a good bit of bindery experience. The man was noncommittal. The very refined middle-aged woman had had years of experience. She no sooner spoke of it than the man

squinted his eyes at her and said: "You belong to the union then, don't you?" "Yes," the woman admitted, with no hesitation, "I do, but that makes no difference. I'm perfectly willing to work with nonunion girls. I'm a good worker and I don't see what difference it should make." The man turned abruptly to me. "What bindery experience have you had?" I had to admit I had had no bindery experience, but I made it clear I was a very experienced person in many other fields—oh, many other—and so willing I was, and quick to learn.

"Nothing doing for you."

But he had advertised for learners.

"Yes, but why should I use learners when I turned away over seventy experienced girls this morning, ready to do any work for any old price?"

I was hoping to hear what else he might say to the union member, but the man left me no excuse for standing around.

I ate my lunch at home.

When the next Sunday morning came, again the future looked bright. I red-penciled eleven "ads"—jobs in three different dress factories, sewing buttons on shoes. You see, I have to pick only such "ads" as allow for no previous experience—it is only unskilled workers I am eligible to be among as yet; girls to pack tea and coffee, to work for an envelope company, in tobacco, on sample cards; girls to pack hair nets, learners on fancy feathers, and learners to operate book-sewing machines.

The rest of the newspaper told much of trouble in

the garment trades. I decided to try the likeliest dress factory first. I was hopeful, but not enough so to take my lunch and apron.

At the first dress factory address before eight o'clock there were about nine girls ahead of me. We waited downstairs by the elevator, as the boss had not yet arrived. The "ad" I was answering read: "WANTED —Bright girls to make themselves useful around dress factory."

Some of us looked brighter than others of us.

Upstairs in the hall we assembled to wait upon the pleasure of the boss. The woodwork was white, the floor pale blue—it was all very impressive.

Finally, second try, the boss glued his eye on me.

"Come in here." A white door closed behind us, and we stood in a little room which looked as if a small boy of twelve had knocked it together out of old scraps and odds and ends, unpainted.

"What experience you have had?"

He was a nice-looking, fairly young Jew, who spoke with a considerable German accent.

"None in a dress factory, but . . ." and I regaled him with the vast amount of experience in other lines that was mine, adding that I had done a good deal of "private dressmaking" off and on, and also assuring him, almost tremblingly, I did so want to land a job—that I was the most willing of workers.

"What you expect to get?"

"What will you pay me?"

"No, I'm asking you. What do you expect to get?"

"Fourteen dollars."

"All right, go on in."

If the room where the boss had received me could have been the work of a twelve-year-old, the rest of the factory must have been designed and executed by a boy of eight, or a lame, halt, and blind carpenter just tottering to his grave. There was not a straight shelf. There was not a straight partition. Boards of various woods and sizes had been used and nothing had ever been painted. Such doors as existed had odd ways of opening and closing. The whole place looked as if it had cost about seven dollars and twenty-nine cents to throw together. But, ah! the white and pale blue of the show rooms!

The dress factory job was like another world compared with candy, brass, and the laundry. In each of those places I had worked on one floor of a big plant, doing one subdivided piece of labor among equally low-paid workers busy at the same sort of job as myself. Of what went on in the processes before and after the work we did, I knew and saw nothing. We packed finished chocolates; we punched slots in already-made lamp cones; we ironed already washed, starched, and dampened clothes. Such work as we did took no particular skill, though a certain improvement in speed and quality of work came with practice. One's eyes could wander now and then, one's thoughts could wander often, and conversation with one's neighbors was always possible.

Behold the dress factory, a little complete world of its own on one small floor where every process of manufacture, and all of it skilled work, could be viewed from any spot. Not quite every process—the designer had a room of her own up front nearer where the woodwork was white.

"Ready-made clothing!" It sounds so simple—just like that. Mrs. Fine Lady saunters into a shop, puts up her lorgnette, and lisps, "I'd like to see something in a satin afternoon dress." A plump blonde in tight-fitting black with a marcel wave trips over to mirrored doors, slides one back, takes a dress off its hanger—and there you are! "So much simpler than bothering with a dressmaker."

But whatever happened to get that dress to the place where the blonde could sell it? "Ready-made," indeed! There has to be a start some place before there is any "made" to it. It was at that point in our dress factory when the French designer first got a notion into her head—she who waved her arms and gesticulated and flew into French-English rages just the way they do on the stage. "*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*"—gray-haired Madame would gasp at our staid and portly Mr. Rogers. Ada could say "My Gawd!" through her Russian nose to him and it had nothing like the same wilting effect.

Ready-made—yes, ready-made. But first Madame got her notion, and then she and her helpers concocted the dress itself. A finished article, it hung inside the wire inclosure where the nice young cutter kept himself and his long high table. The cutter

took a look at the finished garment hanging on the side of his cage, measured a bit with his yardstick, and then proceeded to cut the pattern out of paper. Whereupon he laid flat yards and yards of silks and satins on his table and with an electric cutter sliced out his parts. One mistake—one slice off the line—*Mon Dieu!* it's too terrible to think of! All these pieces had to be sorted according to sizes and colors, and tied and labeled. (Wanted—bright and useful girl right here.)

Next came the sewing machine operators (electric power)—a long narrow table, nine machines at a side, but not more than fourteen operators were employed—thirteen girls and one lone young man. They said that on former piece rates this man used to make from ninety dollars to one hundred dollars a week. The operators were all well paid, especially by candy, brass, and laundry standards, but they were a skilled lot. A very fine-looking lot too—some of the nicest-looking girls I've seen in New York. Everyone had a certain style and assurance. It was good for the eyes to look on them after the laundry thirteen-dollar-a-week type.

When the first operators had done their part the dresses were handed over to the drapers. There were two drapers; they were getting around fifty dollars a week before the hard times. One of the drapers was as attractive a girl as I ever saw any place—bobbed hair, deep-set eyes, a Russian Jewess with features which made her look more like an Italian. She spoke English with hardly any accent.

She dressed very quietly and in excellent taste. All day long the two draped dresses on forms—ever pinning and pinning. The drapers turned the dresses over to certain operators, who finished all machine sewing. The next work fell to the finishers.

In that same end of the factory sat the four finishers, getting "about twenty dollars a week," but again no one seemed sure. Two were Italians who could talk little English. One was Gertie, four weeks married—"to a Socialist." Gertie was another of the well-dressed ones. If you could know these dress factory girls you would realize how, unless gifted with the approach of a newspaper reporter—and I lack that approach—it was next to impossible to ask a girl herself what she was earning. No more than you could ask a lawyer what his fees amounted to. The girls themselves who had been working long together in the same shop did not seem to know what one another's wages were. It was a new state of affairs in my factory experience.

The finishers, after sewing on all hooks and eyes and fasteners and doing all the remaining handwork on the dresses, turned them over to the two pressers, sedate, assured Italians, who ironed all day long and looked prosperous and were very polite.

They brought the dresses back to Jean and her helper—two girls who put the last finishing touches on a garment before it went into the showroom—snipping here and there, rough edges all smoothed off. It was to Jean the boss called my second morning, very loud so all could hear: "If you find anything wrong mit

a dress, don't *look* at it, don't *bodder wid* it—jus' t'row it in dere faces and made dem do it over again! It's not like de old days no more!" (Whatever he meant by that.) So—there was your dress, "ready-made."

Such used to be the entire factory, adding the two office girls; the model, who was wont to run around our part of the world now and then in a superior fashion, clad in a scanty pale-pink-satin petticoat which came just below her knees and an old gray-and-green sweater; plus various male personages, full of business and dressed in their best. Goodness knows what all they did do to keep the wheels of industry running—perhaps they were salesmen. They had the general appearance of earning at least ten to twenty thousand dollars a year. It may possibly have risen as high as two thousand.

And Peters—who was small though grown, and black, and who cleaned up with a fearful dust and snitched lead pencils if you left them around.

At present, in addition, there were the sixteen crochet beaders, because crochet beading is stylish in certain quarters—this "department" newly added just prior to my arrival. But before the beaders could begin work the goods had to be stamped, and before they could be stamped Mr. Rogers (he was middle-aged and a dear and an Italian and his name wasn't "Rogers," but some unpronounceable thing the Germans couldn't get, so it just naturally evolved into something that began with the same letter which they could pronounce) had to concoct a

design. He worked in the cage at a raised end of the cutting table. He pricked the pattern through paper with a machine, at a small table outside by the beaders, that was always piled high with a mess of everything from spools to dresses, which Mr. Rogers patiently removed each time to some spot where some one else found them on top of something she wanted, and less patiently removed them to some other spot, where still less patiently they were found in the way and dumped some place else. Such was life in one factory. And Ada would call out still later: "Mr. Rogers, did you see a pile of dresses on this table when you went to work?"

Whereat in abject politeness and dismay Mr. Rogers would dash from "inside" to "outside" and explain in very broken English that there had been some things on the table, but "vaire carefully" he had placed them—here. And to Mr. Rogers's startled gaze the pile had disappeared.

If a dress had to be beaded, Mr. Rogers took the goods after the cutter finished his job, and he and his helpers stamped the patterns on sleeves, front and back, skirt, by rubbing chalk over the paper. Upon the scene at this psychological moment enters the bright girl to make herself useful. The bright girl "framed-up" the goods for the beaders to work on. (In fact, you noted she entered even earlier, by helping the cutter tie the bundles according to size and color.)

"Frame-up" means taking boards the proper length with broad tape tacked along one edge. First you

pin the goods lengthwise, pins close together. Then you find side boards the desired length and pin the goods along the sides. Then with four iron clamps you fasten the corners together, making the goods as tight as a drum. There is a real knack to it, let me tell you—especially when it comes to queerly shaped pieces—odd backs or fronts or sleeves. Or where you have a skirt some six or eight feet long and three broad. But I can frame! Ada said so.

When I got a piece framed (Now I write those six words and grin) . . . "*when*" . . . Two little skinny horses I had to rest the frames upon. The space I had in which to make myself useful was literally about three by four feet just in front of the shelves where the thread and beads were kept. That is, I had it if no one wanted to get anything in the line of thread or beads, which they always did want to get. Whereupon I moved out—which meant my work might be knocked on the floor, or if it was bigger I had to move the work out with me. Or I crawled under it and got the thread or beads myself. If it were a skirt I was framing up I earned the curses, though friendly, of the assemblage. No one could pass in any direction. The beaders were shut in their quarters till I got through, or they crawled under. Or I poked people in the back with the frames while I was clamping them. I fought and bled and died over every large frame I managed to get together, for the frame was larger than the space I had to work in. Until in compassion they finally moved me around the corner into the dressmaking

quarters, which tried Joe's soul. Joe was the Italian foreman of that end of things. He was nice. But he saw no reason why I should be moved up into his already crowded space. Indeed, I was only a little better off. The fact of the matter was that the more useful I became the more in everybody's way I got. Indeed, it can be taken as a tribute to human nature that everyone in that factory was not a crabbed nervous wreck from having to work on top of everyone else. It was almost like attempting dressmaking in the Subway. The boss at times would gaze upon my own frantic efforts, and he claimed: "Every time I look at you the tears come in my eis." And I would tell him, "Every time I think about myself the tears come in mine." About every other day he appeared with a hammer and some nails and would pound something some place, with the assurance that his every effort spelled industrial progress and especial help to me.

"All I think on is your comfort, yes?"

"Don't get gray over it!"

Nor will I forget that exhibition of the boss's ideas of scientific management. Nothing in the factory was ever where anyone could find it. It almost drove me crazy. What was my joy then when one day the boss told me to put the spools in order. There was a mess of every-colored spool, mixed with every other color, tangled ends, dust, buttons, loose snappers, more dust, beads, more spools, more dust. A certain color was wanted by a stitcher. There was nothing to do but paw. The spool, like as not, would be so

dusty it would take blowings and wipings on your skirt before it could be discovered whether the color was blue or black. I tied my head in tissue paper and sat down to the dusty job of sorting those spools. Laboriously I got all the blacks together and in one box. Laboriously all the whites. That exhausted all the boxes I could lay hands on. I hunted up the boss. "I can't do that spool job decent if I ain't got no boxes to put the different colors in."

"Boxes, boxes! What for you want boxes?"

"For the spools."

"'Ain't you got no boxes?"

"'Ain't got another one."

He hustled around to the spool shelves where I was working.

"*Ach*, boxes! Here are two boxes. What more you want?"

Majestically, energetically, he dumped my black spools out of one box, my white spools out of the other—dumped them back with a flourish into the mess of unassorted dust and colors.

"Here are two boxes! What more you want?"

What redress had I for such a grievance except to wail at him: "My Gawd! my Gawd! I jus' put those spools in them boxes!"

"*Ach*, so!" says the boss. "Vell, put um back in again."

With the sweat of my life's blood I unearthed a ragged empty box here, another there, no two sizes the same. After three days of using every minute to be spared from other jobs on those shelves, I had

every single spool where it belonged and each box labeled as to color. How wondrous grand it looked! How clean and dusted! I made the boss himself gaze upon the glory of it.

"*Ach*, fine!" he beamed.

Two days later it was as if I had never touched a spool. The boxes were broken, the spools spilled all over—pawing was again in season. Not yet quite so much dust, but soon even the dust would be as of yore.

"One cause of labor unrest is undoubtedly the fact that the workers are aware that present management of industry is not always 100 per cent efficient."

So then, I framed up. Nor was it merely that I worked under difficulties as to space. Another of the boss's ideas of scientific management seemed to be to employ as few bright and useful girls as possible. He started with three. He ended with just one. From dawn to dewy eve I tore. It was "Connie, come here!" (Ada, the beadwork forelady.) "Connie, come here!" (The cutter.) "Connie, thread, thread, yes? There's a good girl!" (The beaders.) "Connie, changeable beads, yes? That's the girl!" "Connie, unframe these two skirts quick as you can!" "Connie, never mind finishing those skirts; I got to get this 'special' framed up right away!" "Connie, didn't you finish unframing those skirts?" "Connie, tissue paper, yes? Thanks awfully." "Connie, did you see that tag I laid here? Look for it, will you?"

But the choice and rare moment of my bright and useful career was when the boss himself called, "Oh, Miss Connie, come *mal* here, yes?" And when I got *mal* there he said, "I want you should take my shoes to the cobblers *so fort*, yes? . . . And be sure you get a check . . . and go quick, yes." Whereupon he removed his shoes and shuffled about in a pair of galoshes.

I put on the green tam. I put on the old brown coat with now three buttons gone and the old fur collar, over my blue-checked apron, and with the boss's shoes under my arm out I fared, wishing to goodness I would run into some one I knew, to chuckle with me. Half an hour later the boss called me again.

"I think it is time you should bring my shoes back, yes?" I went. The cobbler said it would be be another five minutes. Five minutes to do what I would with in New York! It was a wondrous sensation. Next to the cobbler's a new building was going up. I have always envied the folks who had time to hang over a railing and watch a new building going up. At last—my own self, my green tam, my brown coat over the blue-checked apron, chewing a stick of Black Jack, hung over the railing and for five whole minutes and watched the men on the steel skeleton. All the time my salary was going on just the same.

I was hoping the boss would tip me—say, a dime—for running his errands. Otherwise I might never get a tip from anyone. He did not. He thanked me, and after that he called me "dearie."

Ada's face wore an anxious look when I got back. She was afraid I might not have liked running errands. Running errands, it seemed, was not exactly popular. I assured her it was "so swell watchin' the riveters on the new buildin'" I didn't care about the shoes.

The first day in any new job seems strange, and you wonder if you ever will get acquainted. In the dress factory I felt that way for several days. Hitherto I had always worked with girls all round me, and it was no time before we were chatting back and forth. In the dress factory I worked by myself at chores no one else did. Also, the other girls had the sort of jobs which took concentration and attention—there was comparatively little talk. Also, the sewing machines inside and the riveting on that steel building outside made too much noise for easy conversation.

At lunch time most of the girls went out to eat at various restaurants round about. They looked so grand when they got their coats and hats on that I could never see them letting me tag along in my old green tam and two-out-of-five buttoned coat. My wardrobe had all fitted in appropriately to candy and brass and the laundry, but not to dressmaking. So I ate my lunch out of a paper bag in the factory with such girls as stayed behind. They were mostly the beaders. And they were mostly "dead ones"—the sort who would not talk had they been given a bonus and share in the profits for it. They read the *Daily News*, a group of some five to one paper, and ate.

By Thursday of the first week I was desperate. How was I ever to "get next" to the dress factory girls? During the lunch hour Friday I gulped down my food and tore for Gimbel's, where I bought five new buttons. Saturday I sewed them on my coat, and Monday and all the next week I ate lunch with Ada and Eva and Jean and Kate at a Yiddish restaurant where the food had strange names and stranger tastes. But at least there was conversation.

Ada I loved—our forelady in the bead work—young, good-looking, intelligent. She rather took me under her wing, in gratitude for which I showed almost immediate improvement along those lines whereon she labored over me. My grammar, for instance. When I said "it ain't," Ada would say, "Connie, Connie, *ain't!*" Whereat I gulped and said "isn't," and Ada smiled approval. Within one week I had picked up wonderfully. At the end of that week Ada and I were quite chummy. She asked me one day if I were married. No. Was she? "You don't think I'd be working like this if I was, do you?" When I asked her what she would be doing if she didn't have to work, she answered, "Oh, lots of things." Nor could I pin her to details. She told me she'd get married to-morrow only her "sweetheart" was a poor man. But she was crazy about him. Oh, she was! The very next day she flew over to where I was framing up. "I've had a fight with my sweetheart!"

It was always difficult carrying on a conversation with Ada. She was being hollered for from every

corner of the factory continually, and in the few seconds we might have had for talk I was hollered for. Especially is such jumpiness detrimental to sharing affairs of the heart. I know only fragments of Ada's romance. The fight lasted all of four days. Then he appeared one evening, and next morning, she beamingly informed me that "her sweetheart had made up. Oh, but he's *some* lover, *I* tell you!"

Ada was born in Russia, but came very young to this country. She spoke English without an accent. Never had she earned less than twenty dollars a week, starting out as a bookkeeper. When crochet beading first became the rage, about five years ago, she went over to that and sometimes made fifty dollars and sixty dollars a week. Here as forelady, she made forty dollars. Twenty dollars of that she gave each week to her mother for board and lodging. Often she had gone on summer vacations. For three years she had paid for a colored girl to do the housework at home. I despaired at first of having Ada so much as take notice of the fact that I was alive. What was my joy then, at the end of the first week, to have her come up and say to me: "Do you know what I want? I want you to come over to Brooklyn and live with me and my folks."

Oh, it's wretched to just walk off and leave folks like that!

That same Saturday morning the boss said he wanted to see me after closing time. There seemed numerous others he wanted to see. Then I dis-

covered, while waiting my turn with these others, that practically no one there knew her "price." There was a good deal of resentment about it, too. He had hired these girls and no word about pay. The other girls waiting that morning were beaders. I learned one trick of the trade which it appears is more or less universal. They had left their former jobs to come to this factory in answer to an "ad" for crochet beaders. If after one week it was found they were getting less than they had at the old place, they would go back and say they had been sick for a week. Otherwise they planned to stay on at this factory. Each girl was called in alone, and alone bargained with the boss. Monday, Sadie, just for instance, ahead of me in the Saturday line, reported the conversation she had had with the boss:

"Well, miss, what you expect to get here?"

"What I'm worth."

"Yes, yes—you're worth one hundred dollars, but I'm talking just plain English. What you expect to get?"

"I tell you what I'm worth."

"All right, you're worth one hundred dollars; you think you'll get thirty dollars. I'll pay you twenty dollars."

(Sadie had previously told me under no consideration would she remain under twenty-five dollars, but she remained for twenty dollars.)

My turn. I thought there was no question about my "price." It was fourteen dollars. But perhaps seeing how I had run my legs almost off, and pinned

my fingers almost off all week, the boss was going voluntarily to raise me.

"What wages you expect to get here?"

Oh, well, since he thus opened the question we would begin all new. I had worked so much harder than I had anticipated.

"Sixteen dollars a week."

"Ho—sixteen dollars!—and last Monday it was fourteen dollars. You're going up, yes?"

"But the work's much harder 'n I thought it 'ud be."

"So you go from fourteen dollars to sixteen dollars and I got you here to tell you you'd get twelve dollars."

Oh, but I was mad—just plain mad! "You let me work all week thinkin' I was gettin' fourteen dollars. It ain't fair!"

"Fair? I pay you what I can afford. Times are hard now, you know."

I could not speak for my upset feelings. To pay me twelve dollars for the endless labor of that week when he had allowed me to think I was getting fourteen dollars! To add insult to injury, he said, "Next week I want you should work later than the other girls evenings, and make no date for next Saturday" (I had told him I was in a hurry to get off for lunch this Saturday) "because I shall want you should work Saturday afternoon."

Such a state of affairs is indeed worth following up. . . .

Monday morning he came around breezily—he

Shows weren't her style. She liked reading. Whenever I got the chance I asked a girl what she did evenings. The answer usually was, "Oh, nothing much." One Friday I asked a group of girls at lunch if they weren't glad the next day was Saturday and the afternoon off. Four of them weren't glad at all, because they had to go home and clean house Saturday afternoons, and do other household chores. "Gee! don't you hate workin' round the house?"

I wonder how much of the women-in-industry movement is traceable to just that.

The first day I was at the dress factory a very dirty but pleasant-faced little Jewish girl said to me, "Ever try workin' at home? Ain't it just awful?" She had made thirty-two dollars a week beading at her last place—didn't know what she'd get here.

I had hoped to hear murmurings and discussions about the conditions of the garment trades and the unions—not a word the whole time. Papers were full of a strike to be called the next week throughout the city, affecting thousands of waist and dress makers. It might as well have been in London. Not an echo of interest in it reached our factory. I asked Sarah if she had ever worked in a union shop. "Sure." "Any different from this?" "Different? You bet it's different. Boss wouldn't dare treat you the way you get treated here." But as usual I was yelled for and got no chance ever to pin Sarah to details.

A group of girls in the dressing room exploded one night, "Gee! they sure treat you like dogs here! No

soap, no towels—nothing." The hours were good—8.30 to 12.15; 1 to 5.15. One Saturday Ada and the boss asked the beaders to work in the afternoon. Not one stayed. Too many had heard the tales of girls working overtime and not being paid anything extra.

Wednesday I went back after my last week's pay. When the cashier caught sight of me she was full of interest. "I was writing you a letter this very day. The boss wants you back awful badly. He's out just now for lunch. Can't you wait?"

Just then the boss stepped from the elevator. "*Ach*, here you are! Now, dearie, if it's just a matter of a few dollars or so—"

I was leaving town. Much discussion. No, I couldn't stay on. Well, if I insisted—yes, he'd get my pay envelope. My, oh, my, they missed me! Why so foolish as to leave New York? Now, as for my wages, they could easily be fixed to suit. . . . All right, all right, he'd get my last pay envelope.

And there was my pay envelope with just twelve dollars again. "What about my overtime?"

Overtime? Who said anything about overtime? He did himself. He'd promised me if I worked every night that week late I'd get paid for it. Every single night I had stayed, and where was my pay for it?

He shook his finger at my time card.

Show him one hour of overtime on that card!

I showed him where every night the time clock registered overtime.

Yes, but not once was it a full hour. And didn't I

know overtime never counted unless it was at least a full hour?

No, he had never explained anything about that. I'd worked each night until everything was done and I'd been told I could go.

Well, of course he didn't want to rob me. I really had nothing coming to me. Each night I'd stayed on till about 6. But they would figure it out and see what they could pay me. They figured. I waited. At length majestically he handed out fifty-six cents.

The fat, older brother in the firm rode down in the elevator with me—he who used to move silently around the factory about four times a day, squinting out of his beady eyes, such light as shown there bespeaking 100 per-cent possession. He held his fat thumbs in the palms of his fat hands and benignly he was wont to survey his realm. Mine! Mine! Mine! his every inch of being said. Nor could his proportion of joy have been greater if he had six floors of his own to survey, instead of one little claptrap back room. It did make him so happy. He wore a kindly and never-changing expression, and he never spoke.

Going down in the elevator, he edged over to my corner. He pinched my arm, he pinched my cheeks. *Ach*, but he'd miss me bad. Nice girl, I was.

Evidently he, too, had evolved a moral equivalent for a living wage. Little kindly personal attentions were his share for anything not adequately covered by twelve dollars and fifty-six cents.

V

No. 536 Tickets Pillow Cases

AH, one should write of the bleachery *via* the medium of poetry! If the thought of the brass-works comes in one breath and the bleachery in the next, the poetry must needs be set to music—the Song of the Bleachery. What satisfaction there must be to an employer who grows rich—or makes his income, whatever it may be—from a business where so much light-heartedness is worked into the product! Let those who prefer to sob over woman labor behind factory prison bars visit our bleachery. Better still, let them work there. Here at least is one spot where they can dry their tears. If the day ever dawns when the conditions in that bleachery can be referred to as typical of American industrial life, exist the agitator, the walking delegate, the closed and open shop fight.

I can hear a bleachery operator grunting, "My Gawd! what's the woman ravin' over? Is it *our* bleachery she's goin' on about?" Most of the workers in the bleachery know no other industrial experience. In that community, so it seems, a child is born, attends school up to the minimum required, or a bit beyond, and then goes to work in the bleach-

ery—though a few do find their way instead to the overall factory, and still fewer to the shirtwaist factory. No other openings exist at the Falls.

There is more or less talk nowadays about Industrial Democracy. Some of us believe that the application of the democratic principle to industry is the most promising solution to industrial unrest and inefficiency. The only people who have written about the idea or discussed it, so far, have been either theorizers or propagandists from among the intellectuals, or enthused appliers of the principle, more or less high up in the business end of the thing. What does Industrial Democracy mean to the rank and file working under it? Is it one of those splendid programs which look epoch-making in spirit, but never permeates to those very people whom it is especially designed to affect?

It was to find out what the workers themselves thought of Industrial Democracy that I boarded a boat and journeyed seventy miles up the Hudson to work in the bleachery, where, to the pride of those responsible, functions the Partnership Plan.

What do the workers think of working under a scheme of Industrial Democracy?

What do the citizens of the United States think of living under a scheme of Political Democracy?

The average citizen does not think one way or the other about it three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. Even voting days the rank and file of us do not ponder overlong on democracy *versus* autocracy. Indeed, if it could be done silently, in the

dead of night, and the newspapers would promise not to say a word about it, perhaps we might change to a benevolent autocracy, and if we could silence all orators, as well as the press, what proportion of the population would be vitally concerned in the transition? Sooner or later, of course, alterations in the way of doing this and that would come about, the spirit of the nation would change. But through it all—autocracy, if it were benevolent, or democracy—there would be little conscious concern on the part of the great majority. Always provided the press and orators would keep quiet.

From my own experience, the same could be said of Industrial Democracy. Autocracy, democracy, the rank and file of the workers, especially the women workers, understand not, ponder not.

"Say," chuckled Mamie, "I could 'a' died laughin' once. A fella came through here askin' everybody what we thought of the Partnership Plan. My Gawd! when he got to me I jus' told him I didn't understand the first thing about it. What ud he do but get out a little book and write what I said down. Never again! Anybody asks me now what I think of the Partnership Plan, and I keep my mouth shut, you bet."

Once an enthused visitor picked on me to ask what I thought of working under the Partnership Plan. After he moved on the girls got the giggles. "Say, these folks that come around here forever asking what we think about the Partnership Plan! Say, what any of us knows about that could be put in a nutshell."

And gray-haired Ella Jane, smartest of all, ten years folding pillow cases, said: "I don't know anything about that Partnership Plan. All I know is that we get our share of the profits and our bonuses, and I can't imagine a nicer place to work. They do make you work for what you get, though. But it's all white and aboveboard and you know nobody's trying to put something over on you."

But the general spirit of the place? Could that be traced to anything else but the special industrial scheme of things? One fact at least is certain—the employing end is spared many a detail of management; the shift in responsibility is educating many a worker to the problems of capital. And production is going up.

Have you ever tried to find a spare bed in a town where there seems to be not a spare bed to be had? I left my belongings in an ice cream store and followed every clue, with a helpful hint from the one policeman, or the drug store man, or a fat, soiled grandmother who turned me down because they were already sleeping on top of one another in her house. In between I dropped on a grassy hillside and watched Our Bleachery baseball team play a Sunday afternoon game with the Colored Giants. We won.

And then I took up the hunt again, finally being guided by the Lord to the abode of the sisters Weston—two old maids, combined age one hundred and forty-nine years, who took boarders. Only there

were no more to take. The Falls was becoming civilized. Improvements were being installed in most of the houses. Boarders, which meant mainly school-teachers, preferred a house with Improvements. The abode of the sisters Weston had none. It was half a company house, with a pump in the kitchen which drew up brown water of a distressing odor.

The sisters Weston had worked in the overall factory in their earlier years, hours 7 to 6, wages five dollars a week, paid every five to six weeks. Later they tried dressmaking; later still, boarders. I belonged to the last stage of all—they no longer took boarders, they took a boarder. Mr. Welsh from the electrical department in the bleachery, whose wife was in Pennsylvania on a visit to her folks, being sickly and run down, as seemed the wont of wives at the Falls, took his meals at our boarding house, when he was awake for them. Every other week Mr. Welsh worked night shift.

My belongings were installed in the room assigned me, and the younger of the sisters Weston, seventy-three, sat stiffly but kindly in a chair. "Now about the room rent . . . ?" she faltered. Goodness! yes! My relief at finding a place to sleep in after eleven turn-downs was so great that I had completely neglected such a little matter as what the room might cost me.

"What do you charge?" I asked.

"What do you feel you can pay? We want you should have some money left each week after your board's paid. What do you make at the bleachery?"

My conscience fidgeted within me a bit at that. "I'd rather you charged me just what you think the room and board are worth to you, not what you think I can pay."

"Well, we used to get eight dollars a week for room and board. It's worth that."

It is cheaper to live than die in the Falls at that rate. Three hot meals a day I got: breakfast, coffee, toast, two eggs, mush, later fruit; dinner, often soup, always meat, potatoes, vegetables, coffee, and a dessert; supper, what wasn't finished at dinner, and tea. Always there was plenty of everything. Sometimes too much, if it were home-canned goods which had stood too many years on the shelves, due to lack of boarders to eat the same. But the sisters Weston meant the best.

"How d'ya like the punkin pie?" the older, Miss Belle, would ask.

The pumpkin pie had seemed to taste a trifle strange, but we laid it to the fact that it was some time since we had eaten pumpkin pie. "It tastes all right."

"Now, there! Glad to hear you say it. Canned that punkin ourselves. Put it up several years ago. Thought it smelled and looked a bit spoiled, but I says, guess I'll cook it up; mebbe the heat 'n' all 'll turn it all right again. There's more in the kitchen!"

But it suddenly seemed as if I must get to work earlier that noon than I had expected. "Can't ya even finish your pie? I declare I'm scared that pie won't keep long."

Mr. Welsh got sick after the first couple of meals, but bore on bravely, nor did the matter of turned string beans consciously worry Mr. Welsh. The sisters themselves were always dying; their faithful morning reports of the details of what they had been through the night before left nothing to the imagination. "Guess I oughtn't ta 'a' et four hot cakes for supper when I was so sick yesterday afternoon. I sure was thinking I'd die in the night. . . . 'Liza, pass them baked beans; we gotta git them et up."

At six o'clock in the morning the bleachery whistle blows three times loud enough to shake the shingles on the roofs of the one-hundred-year-old houses and the leaves on the more than one-hundred-year-old trees about the Falls. Those women who have their breakfasts to get and houses to straighten up before they leave for work—and there are a number—must needs be about before then. Seven o'clock sees folks on all roads leading to the bleachery gate. At 7.10 the last whistle blows; at 7.15 the power is turned on, wheels revolve, work begins.

It must be realized that factory work, or any other kind of work, in a small town is a different matter from work in a large city, if for no other reason than the transportation problem. Say work in New York City begins at 7.45. That means for many, if not most, of the workers, an ordeal of half an hour's journey in the Subways or "L," shoving, pushing, jamming, running to catch the shuttle; shoving, pushing, jamming, running for the East Side Sub-

way; shoving, pushing, jamming, scurrying along hard pavements to the factory door; and at the end of a day of eight or nine hours' work, all that to be done over again to get home.

Instead, at the Falls, it meant a five minutes' leisurely—unless one overslept—walk under old shade trees, through the glen along a path lined with jack-in-the-pulpits, wild violets, moss—the same five minutes' walk home at noon to a hot lunch, plenty of time in which to eat it, a bit of visiting on the way back to the factory, and a leisurely five minutes' walk home in the late afternoon. No one has measured yet what crowded transportation takes out of a body in the cities.

New York factories are used to new girls—they appear almost daily in such jobs as I have worked in. At the Falls a strange person in town is excitement enough, a strange girl at the bleachery practically an unheard-of thing. New girls appear now and then to take the places of those who get married or the old women who must some time or other die. But not strange girls. Everyone in the bleachery grew up with everyone else; as Ella Jane said, you know their mothers and their grandmothers, too.

It so happened that a cataclysmic event had visited the Falls the week before my appearance. A family had moved away, thereby detaching a worker from the bleachery—the girl who ticketed pillow cases. The Sunday I appeared in town, incidentally, seven babies were born. That event—or those events—plus me, minus the family who moved away and an

old man who had died the week before, made the population of the Falls 4,202. Roughly, half that number either worked at the bleachery or depended on those who worked there. Who or what the other half were, outside the little group of Main Street tradespeople, remained a mystery. Of course, there were the ministers of the gospel and their families—in the same generous overdose—apportioned to most small towns. The actual number working in the bleachery was about six hundred and twenty men and women.

Odd, the different lights in which you can see a small town. The chances are that, instead of being a worker, I might have spent the week end visiting some of the "*élite*" of the Falls. In that case we should have motored sooner or later by the bleachery gate and past numerous company houses. My host, with a wave of the hand, would have dispatched the matter by remarking, "The town's main industry. The poor devils live in these houses you see."

Instead, one day I found myself wandering along the street of the well-to-do homes. What in the world. . . ? Who all ever lived way up here? Whatever business had they in our Falls? Did they have anyone to talk to, anything to do? I laid the matter before Mamie O'Brien.

"Any rich folk living around here?"

"Guess so. Some swell estates round about—never see the people much."

"Are they stuck up?"

"Dunno—na. Saw one of 'em at the military

funeral last week. She wasn't dressed up a bit swell —just wore a plaid skirt. Didn't look like anybody at all."

In other words, we were the town. It was the bleachery folk you saw on the streets, in the shops, at the post office, at the movies. The bleachery folk, or their kind, I saw at the three church services I attended. If anyone had dared sympathize with us—called us "poor devils"!

The first morning at the bleachery the foreman led me to the narrow space in the middle of three large heavy tables placed "U" shape, said, "Here's a girl to ticket," and left me. The foreman knew who I was. Employment conditions at the bleachery were such that it was necessary to make sure of a job by arranging matters ahead of time with the manager. Also, on a previous occasion I had visited the bleachery, made more or less of an investigation, and sat in on a Board of Operatives' meeting. Therefore, I left off my earrings, bought no Black Jack, did not feel constrained to say, "It ain't," though saw no reason why I too should not indulge in "My Gawd!" if I felt like it. I find it one of the most contagious expressions in the language. The girls did not seem to know who I was or what I was. Not until the second day did the girl who stood next to me ask my name—a formality gone through within the first five minutes in any New York job. I answered Cornelia Parker. She got it Miss Parks, and formally introduced me around the table—"Margaret, meet Miss

Parks—Miss White, Miss Parks." Also all very different from New York. About the only questions asked by any girl were, "You're from New York?" and, "Where did you work before you came here?" Some wondered if I wasn't lonesome without my folks. I didn't have any folks. There was none of the expressed curiosity of the New York worker as to my past, present, and future. Not until the last few days did I feel forced to volunteer now and then enough information so that they would get my name and me more or less clear in their minds and never feel, after their heart-warming cordiality, that I had tried "to put anything over on them." Whether I was Miss Parks or Mrs. Parker, it made no difference to them. It did to me, for I felt here at last I could keep up the contacts I had made; and instead of walking off suddenly, leaving good friends behind without a word, I could honestly say I was off to the next job, promise everyone I'd write often and come again to the Falls, and have everyone promise to write me and never come to New York without letting me know. I can lie awake nights and imagine what fun it is going to be getting back to the Falls some day and waiting by the bridge down at the bleachery for the girls to come out at noon, seeing them all again. Maybe Mrs. Halley will call out her, "Hi! look 'ose 'ere!"

At our bleachery, be it known, no goods were manufactured. We took piece goods in the rough, mostly white, bleached, starched, and finished it, and rolled

or folded the finished stuff for market. In Department 10, where most of the girls worked, the west end of the big third floor, three grades of white goods were made into sheets and pillow cases, ticketed, bundled, and boxed for shipping. Along the entire end of the room next the windows stood the operating machines, with rows of girls facing one another, all hemming sheets or making pillow cases. There were some ten girls who stood at five heavy tables, rapidly shaking out the hemmed sheets, inspecting them for blemishes of any kind, folding them for the mangle, hundreds and hundreds a day, At other tables workers took the ironed sheets, ticketed them, tied them in bundles, wrapped and labeled and stacked the bundles, whereupon they sooner or later were wheeled off to one side and boxed. Four girls worked at the big mangle. Besides the mangle, one girl spent her day hand-ironing such wrinkles as appeared now and then after the mangle had done its work.

So much for sheets. There were three girls (the term "girl" is used loosely, since numerous females in our department will never see fifty again) who slipped pillow cases over standing frames which poked out the corners. After they were mangled they were inspected and folded, ticketed, bundled, and wrapped at our three U-shaped tables. Also there, one or two girls spent part time slipping pieces of dark-blue paper under the hemstitched part of the pillow cases and sheets, so that the ultimate consumer might get the full glory of her purchase.

The first week Nancy, a young Italian girl (there were only two nationalities in the Falls—Italians and Americans), and I ticketed pillow cases. At the end of that time I had become efficient enough so that I alone kept the bundler busy and Nancy was put on other work. Ticketing means putting just the right amount of smelly paste on the back of a label, slapping it swiftly just above the center of the hem. There are hundreds of different labels, according to the size and quality of the pillow cases and the store which retails them. My best record was ticketing about six thousand seven hundred in one day. The cases come folded three times lengthwise, three times across, sixty in a bundle. As fast as I ticketed a bundle I shoved them across to the "bundler," who placed six cases one way, six the other, tied the bundle of twelve at each end with white tape, stacked them in layers of three until the pile was as high as possible for safety, when it was shoved across to the wrapper. How Margaret's fingers flew! She had each dozen in its paper, tied and labeled, in the wink of an eye, almost.

In our department there were three boys who raced up and down with trucks; one other who wrapped the sheets when he did not have his arm gayly around some girl; and the little man to pack the goods in their shipping boxes and nail them up. There were two forewomen—pretty, freckled-faced Tess and the masculine Winnie. Over all of us was "Hap," the new boss elected by Department 10 as its representative on the Board of Operatives. It is

electric chair to-morrow? Wasn't it the strangest thing that somebody's body hadn't been recovered yet? Whatdyaknow about a father what 'll strangle his own child? A man got drowned after he'd been married only two days. And did I think Dempsey or Carpentier would win the fight? "Gee! Wouldn't you give your hat to see that fight?"

Meanwhile I was nearly drowning myself and the labels in paste, at the same time trying to appear intelligent about a lot of things I evidently was most uninformed about; working up an enthusiasm for the Dempsey-Carpentier fight which would have led anyone to believe my sole object in working was to accumulate enough cash to pay the price of admission. And all this time I was feasting my eyes on fresh-faced girls in summer wash dresses, mostly Americans, some Italians; no rouge whatever; not a sign of a lipstick, except on one girl; little or no powder; a large, airy, clean, white room, red-and-white striped awnings at the windows; and wherever the eye looked hillsides solid with green trees almost close enough to touch (the bleachery was built down in a hollow beside a little river). Oh, it was too good to be true, after New York!

Pretty gray-haired, pink-cheeked (real genuine pink-cheeked) Mrs. Hall and I were talking about the bleachery on our way to work one morning. Mrs. Hall had been a forelady in a New York private dressmaking establishment. She had what is called "style and personality." Her wages in New York had been thirty-five dollars a week, and she had much

It was the bundler who took me under her wing that first day—pretty Mamie O'Brien—three generations in the Falls. There was no talk of vamping, no discussions of beaus. Everyone told everything she had done since Saturday noon.

"Hey, Margaret, didjagototha movies Saturday night?"

"Sure. Swell, wasn't it?"

"You said it. I 'ain't ever saw sweller. . . ."

"I seen Edna's baby Sunday. Awful cute. Had on them pink shoes Amy made it. . . ."

"Say, ain't that awful about Mr. Tinney's grandchild over to Welkville! Only lived three hours. . . ."

"They're puttin' in the bathtub at Owenses'. . . ."

"What dya know! After they got the bathroom all papered at Chases' they found they'd made a mistake and it's all got to be ripped down. Bathtub won't fit in." ("Improvements" were one of the leading topics of conversation day in and day out at the Falls.)

"Ain't that new hat of Jess Tufts a fright? I 'ain't never saw her look worse."

Back and forth it went—all the small gossip of the small town where everyone knows everything about everyone else from start to finish. It was all a bit too mild for Mamie, as I later learned—indeed, I began to learn it that day. It was no time before Mamie was asking my opinion on every detail of the Stillman case: Did I think Mrs. Stokes would get her divorce? Did I consider somebody or other guilty of some crime or other? Somebody gets the

curious as to what it was all about that one by one the girls left their machines and gathered up one end of the room to laugh with the rest, until production, it was apparent, was at a standstill. Winnie went out and told Hap. Hap merely stepped inside the room, and every girl did "sure get busy." It was the only time even Hap so much as paid the least attention to what went on. All day there was talk, all day laughter, all day visiting a bit here and there, back and forth. Yet in the month of April production had reached the highest point ever, and the month I was there was expected to surpass April. It is significant that with all the fun, the standard of efficiency and production in our bleachery was such that out of eighteen like industries in the country, we were one of the only two running full time. Thirteen were shut down altogether.

That first day I asked Mamie what time work began in the morning. Mamie giggled. "I dunno. Say, Margaret, what time does work begin in the morning?" "Seven-fifteen, I think." Under the Partnership Plan I knew that each operative was allowed a week's vacation on full pay. But every time late, after fifteen times, deducted so many minutes from the vacation, just as any time off without sufficient cause meant that much less vacation.

"Ever been late?" I asked Mamie.

More giggles. "Say, Margaret, she wants to know if I was ever late!" To me: "Ninety-seven times last year—no vacation at all for mine. Ask Margaret how many time she's been late."

Still more giggles. Margaret giggled, I giggled. Margaret had been late one hundred eighteen times. Some of the girls were late practically every day; they were like small boys who would not for the world have anyone think they would try to do in school what was expected of them. Yet there were several girls who were to come into their full week off—the names and dates were posted on the bulletin board; others were given five days, three days, down to a few whose allotment out of a possible week was one-half day. But several of the most boastful over their past irregular record, and who were receiving no vacation at all, claimed they were going to be on time every day this coming year—"Sure." This was the first year the vacation with pay had been granted. I thought of Tessie at the candy factory—Tessie who had been sent speedily home by the pop-eyed man at the door because she was ten minutes late, due to taking her husband to the hospital. Verily, there is no "factory atmosphere" about the bleachery, compared with New York standards. The men, they say, take the whole matter of punctuality and attendance more seriously than the women.

The second day I began my diary with, "A bleachery job is no job at all." That again was by contrast. Also, those first two days were the only two, until the last week, that we did not work overtime at our table. When orders pour in and the mangle works every hour and extra folders are put on and the bundles of pillow cases pile up, then, no matter with what speed you manage to slap on those labels, you never

seem to catch up. Night after night Nancy, Mamie, Margaret, and I worked overtime. From 7.15 in the morning till 6 at night is a long day. Then for sure and certain we did get tired, and indeed by the end of a week of it we were well-nigh "tuckered out." But the more orders that came in the more profits to be divided fifty-fifty between Capital and Labor.

(The Handbook on the Partnership Plan reads: "Our profit sharing is a 50-50 proposition. The market wage of our industry is paid to Labor and a minimum of 6% is paid to Capital. After these have been paid, together with regular operating expenses, depreciation reserve, taxes, etc., and after the Sinking Funds have been provided for by setting aside 15% of the next profits for Labor and 15% for Capital, the remaining net profits are divided 50% for Capital and 50% for the operatives, and the latter sum divided in proportion to the amount of each one's pay for the period. . . . A true partnership must jointly provide for losses as well as for the sharing of profits. . . . These Sinking Funds are intended to guarantee Capital its minimum return of 6% during periods when this shall not have been carried, and to provide unemployment insurance for the operatives, paying half wages when the company is unable to furnish employment.")

In the candy factory back in New York, Ida, the forelady, would holler from the end of the room, "My Gawd! girls, work faster!" At the bleachery, when extra effort was needed, the forelady passed a letter

around our table from a New York firm, saying their order must be filled by the end of that week or they would feel justified in canceling the same. Every girl read the letter and dug her toes in. No one ever said, "You gotta work overtime to-night!" We just mutually decided there was nothing else to do about it, so it was, "Let's work overtime to-night again." It was time-and-a-half pay for overtime, to be sure, but it would be safe to assert it was not alone for the time and a half we worked. We felt we had to catch up on orders. A few times only, some one by about four o'clock would call: "Oh, gee! I'm dead; I've been workin' like a horse all day. I jus' can't work overtime to-night." The chances were if one girl had been working like a horse we all had. Such was the interrelation of jobs at our table.

Except, indeed, Italian Nancy. Whether it was because Nancy was young, or not overstrong, or not on piece rates, or a mixture of the three, Nancy never anguished herself working, either during the day or overtime. One evening she spent practically the entire overtime hour, at time and a half, washing and ironing a collar and cuffs for one of the girls. Nor did any of our table think it at all amiss.

During the day Nancy was the main little visitor from our table. She ambled around and brought back the news. If interesting enough from any quarter, another of us would betake herself off for more details. One day Nancy's young eyes were as big as saucers.

"Say, whatdyaknow! That Italian girl Minna,

she's only fifteen and she's got a gold ring on with a white stone in it and she says she's engaged!" We sent Nancy back for more details. For verification she brought back the engagement ring itself. "Whatdyaknow! Only fifteen!" (Nancy herself was a year beyond that mature age.) "The man she's goin' to marry is awful old, twenty-five! Whatdyaknow!" At a previous time Nancy had regaled our table with an account of how, out of a sense of duty to a fellow-countryman, she had announced to this same Minna that she simply must take a bath. "Na," said Minna, "too early yet." That was the end of May.

We were all, even I after the third day, on piecework at our table, except Nancy. Most of the girls in Department 10 were on piecework. There was one union in the bleachery; that was in another department where mostly men were employed—the folders. They worked time rates. With us, as soon as a girl's record warranted it, she was put on piece rates. Nancy and most of those young girls were still, after one or two years, on time rates—around eleven dollars a week they made. There was one case of a girl who did little, day in and day out, but her hair. She was the one girl who used a lip-stick. They had taken her off time rates and put her on piecework. She was a machine operator. The last week I was there her earnings were a little over two dollars for the week. She was incorrigible. Some of the machine operators made around thirty dollars a week. The mangle girls earned around twenty-five

dollars. Old Mrs. Owens, standing up and inspecting sheets at the table behind me, made from twenty dollars to twenty-five dollars. (Mrs. Owens had inspected sheets for thirteen years. I asked her if she ever felt she wanted to change and try something else. "No, sir," said Mrs. Owens; "a rolling stone gathers no moss.") Mamie, bundler, made around sixteen dollars; Margaret, at our table, went as high once as twenty-five dollars, but she averaged around twenty dollars. My own earnings were twelve dollars and fifty-three cents the first week, fifteen dollars and twenty-three cents the second, eight dollars and twenty-seven cents the third. All the earnings at our table were low that last week—Margaret's were around twelve dollars. For one thing, there was a holiday. No wonder employers groan over holidays! The workers begin to slacken up about two days ahead and it takes two days after the day off to recover. Then, too, we indulged in too much nonsense that last week. We laughed more than we worked, and paid for it. The next week Mamie and Margaret claimed they were going to bring their dinners the whole week to work that noon hour and make up for our evil days. But as gray-haired Ella Jane said, she laughed so much that week she claimed she had a stomach ache. "We'll be a long time dead, once we die. Why not laugh when you get a chance?"

Why not?—especially in a small town where it is well to take each chance for fun and recreation as it comes—since goodness knows when the next will

show itself. Outside of the gayety during working hours, there was little going on about the Falls. Movies—of course, movies. Four times a week the same people, usually each entire family, conscientiously change into their best garments and go to the movie palace. The children and young people fill the first rows, the grown folk bring up the rear. Four times a week young and old get fed on society dramas, problem plays, bathing girl comedies. Next day it is always:

"Sadie, did ya saw the show last night? Wasn't it swell where she recognized her lover just before he got hung?"

Just once since movies were has the town been taken by storm, and that was while I was there. It was "The Kid" that did it. Many that day at the bleachery said they weren't going—didn't like Charlie Chaplin—common and pie-slinging; cheap; always all of that. Sweet-faced Mamie, who longs to go through Sing Sing some day—"That's where they got the biggest criminals ever. Wonder if they let you see the worst ones"—Mamie, who had thrilled to a trip through the insane asylum; Mamie, who could discuss for hours the details of how a father beat his child to death; Mamie, to whom a divorce was meat and a suicide drink—Mamie wasn't going to see Charlie Chaplin. All that pie-slinging stuff made her sick.

Usually a film shows but once at the Falls. "The Kid" ran Monday matinée. Monday night the first time in history the movie palace was filled and over

two hundred turned away. Tuesday night it was shown to a third full house. Everyone was converted.

As for dancing, once a week, Friday nights, there was a dance at the "Academy." Time was when Friday night's dance was an event, and the male contingent from the largest near-by city was wont to attend. But it cost twenty-four cents to journey by trolley from the largest near-by city to the Falls, fifty cents to attend the dance. Unemployment at the largest near-by city meant that any dancing indulged in by its citizens was at home, minus car fare. Also, the music for dancing at the Falls was not favorably commented upon. So sometimes there were six couples at the dance, once in a great while twenty. The youths present were home talent, short on thrills for the fair ones present.

Indeed, the problem of the Falls was the problem of every small town—where in the world could an up-and-doing girl turn for a beau? The only young men in the place were those married still younger and anchored there, or the possessors of too little gumption to get out. Those left hung over the rail at the end of the Main Street bridge and eyed every female passer-by. It was insult heaped on boredom, from the girls' point of view, that a Falls youth never so much as tipped his hat when spoken to. "Paralysis of the arms is here widespread," Bess put it. "You oughta see 'em in winter," Margaret giggled one Sunday while four of us were walking the streets for diversion. "If you want to know where the gallants of the Falls are in winter, look for a sunny

spot. They collect in patches of sun, like some kind of bugs or animals."

As for reading, "Do you like to read?"

"Crazy 'bout readin'."

"What, for instance?"

"Oh, books, movie magazines. Don't ever remember the names of anything. Swell stories. Gee! I cried and cried over the last one. . . ."

Or, "Do much reading?"

"Na, never git time to read."

My old maids never so much as took the newspaper. They figured that if news was important enough they'd hear about it sooner or later, and meanwhile there was much to keep up with at the Falls.

"Can't hardly sleep nights, got so much on my mind," the seventy-sixer would say.

One night she just got nervous fidgets something awful, worrying lest her brother might not get to the Baptist chicken dinner after all, when he'd gone and paid seventy-five cents for his ticket.

Sunday there was church to attend, the Catholics flourishing, the Episcopalians next, four other denominations tottering this way and that. I heard the Baptist minister preach that every word in the Bible was inspired by God, ending with a plea for the family altar.

"Christian brethren, I'm a man who has seen both sides of life. I could have gone one way. It is by the grace of God and the family altar that I stand before you the man I am."

There were thirty-one people in the congregation who heard his young though quavering words, eight of them children, two the organist and her husband, nine of the remainder women over sixty.

The Methodist, that morning, preached on the need of a revival at the Falls, and Mr. Welsh, the electrician, whose wife was resting up in Pennsylvania, thought he was right. Sunday baseball—that day our bleachery team played the Keen Kutters—pained Mr. Welsh. The Methodist minister before this one had been a thorn in the flesh of his congregation. He frankly believed in amusements, disgraced them by saying out loud at a union service that he favored Sunday baseball. Another minister got up and "sure made a fool of him," thank goodness. Where was the renegade now? Called to a church in a large Middle West city where they have no more sense than to pay him twice what he was getting at the Falls.

That night I heard a visiting brother at the Methodist church plead for support for foreign missions, that we might bring the light of the ideal Christian civilization under which we live to the thirsty savages in dark places. He poured his message to an audience of twenty-one, ten of them gray-haired women, one a child.

All the ministers prayed long for Harding and were thankful he was a child of God.

Three of us girls rowed up the lake one night and cooked our supper and talked about intimate things. It was a lake worth traveling miles to see. It was

one block from the post office. Mamie had been to the lake twice in all her life. It was good for canoeing, rowing, fishing, swimming, and, best of all, just for the eyesight. Yet to the great majority it did not exist.

The bleachery, through its Partnership Plan, ran a village club house on Main Street. The younger boys, allowing only for school hours, worked the piano player from morn till night. There was a gymnasium. Suppers were given now and then. It was supposed to be for the use of the girls certain days, but they took little or no advantage of it.

Otherwise, and mostly, when the weather permitted, up and down the street folk sat on their front porches and rocked or went inside and played the victrola.

"Gawd! If I could shake the Falls!" many a girl sighed. Yet they had no concrete idea what they would shake it for. Just before I came the bleachery girls were called into meeting and it was explained to them that Bryn Mawr College was planning a two months' summer school for working girls. Its attractions and possibilities were laid forth in detail. It was explained that Vassar College and a woman's club were making it possible for two bleachery girls to go, with all expenses paid. Out of 184 eligible girls four signed up as being interested. One of those later withdrew her name. The two chosen were Bess and Margaret, as fine girls as ever went to any college. There was much excitement the Saturday morning their telegrams came, announcing Bryn

Mawr had passed favorably upon their candidacy. Bess especially was beside herself. "Oh, it's what I've longed to have a chance to do all my life!" She had clutched a *New Republic* under her arms for days containing an article about the summer school. Both Margaret and Bess had spent a couple of years at West Point during the war as servants, for a change. They had worked for the colonel's wife and loved it. "Gee! the fun we had!"

Yet it was no time before Main Street characteristics came to the front.

Only four girls had so much as expressed an interest in the Bryn Mawr scheme. Within a week after the two girls received the telegrams, tongues got busy. Margaret looked ready to cry one afternoon.

"Hey! what's the matter?"

"My Gawd! This place makes you sick. Can't no one let a person get started enjoyin' themselves but what they do their best to spoil it for you!" Her hands were wrapping pillow case bundles like lightning, her head bent over her work. "Don't I know I ain't nothin' but a factory girl? Don't I know I probably won't ever be nothin' but one? Can't a person take a chance to get off for two months and go to that college without everybody sayin' you're tryin' to be stuck up and get to be somethin' grand and think you won't be a factory girl no more? I don't see anything I'm gettin' out of this that's goin' to make me anything but just a factory girl still. I'm not comin' back and put on any airs.

and Bess went, too, on request from above, that they might appear more intelligent should anyone ask at Bryn Mawr about the Partnership Plan. ("My land, what *would* we tell them?" they wailed.) The Board meetings are officially set down as open to all the operatives, only no one ever heard of anyone else ever attending. The two girls were "fussed" at the very idea of being present, and dressed in their best.

The president, elected representative from the starch room, called the meeting to order from his position at the head of the table in the Village Club House. Every member of the Board shaves and puts on his Sunday clothes, which includes a white collar, for the Board meeting. It is no free show, either. They are handed out two dollars apiece for attending, at the end of the meeting, the same idea as if it were Wall Street. The secretary reads the minutes of the Board of Management. ("The Board of Management was set up by the Board of Directors in July, 1919, as a result of a request from the Board of Operatives for more than merely 'advisory' power which the Board of Operatives then enjoyed in reference to matters of mill management, wages, working conditions, etc. The Board of Management consists of six members, three of whom are the treasurer, the New York agent, and the local manager, and three of whom are elected by the Board of Operatives from their number. . . . The Board of Management is authorized to settle and adjust such matters of mill management as may arise. . . .") The Company

statement, up to March 31, 1921, was read. There followed a report from the Housing Committee—first a financial statement. Then it seemed somebody wanted to put somebody else out of a house, and there were many complications indeed arising therefrom, which took much discussion from everyone and bitter words. It looked as if it would have to be taken to court. The conclusion seemed to be that the Board felt that its executive secretary, chosen by the management, though paid out of the common funds, had exceeded his authority in making statements to tenants. We girls rather shivered at the acrimony of the discussion. Had they been lady board members having such a row, half of them would have been in tears. Next, old Mrs. Owens, who shook sheets behind me, wanted to buy a certain house on a certain avenue—company house, of course. Third, one Mr. Jones on Academy Street wants us to paper his kitchen—he will supply the paper. And there followed other items regarding paint for this tenant, new floor for that, should an old company boarding house be remodeled for a new club house or an apartment house; it was decided to postpone roofing a long row of old company houses, etc.

The operative from the folding and packing room was chairman of the Housing Committee, a strong union enthusiast. The representative from the mechanical department reported for the Recreation and Education Committee; all the night school classes had closed, with appropriate final exercises, for the season; the children's playground would be

ready for use July 1st. The man from the "gray" room and singe house reported for the Working Conditions Committee. Something about watchmen and a drinking fountain, and wheels and boxes in the starch room; washing facilities for shovelers; benches and back stairs.

The Finance Committee reported a deficit on the mechanical and electrical smoker. Much discussion as to why a deficit and who ought to pay it, and what precedent were they setting, and all and all, but it was ordered paid—this time. Webster's bills were too high for papering and painting company houses. He was a good worker, his plaster and his paper stuck where they belonged, which hadn't been the rule before. But it was decided he was too costly even so, and they were going back to the company paperers—perhaps their work would stick better next time. A report from the Board of Directors was discussed and voted upon. . . . The minutes of the Board of Operatives were posted all through the mill. Did anyone read them? If so, or if not so, should the Board of Management minutes also be posted? It was voted to postpone posting such minutes, though they were open to any operative, as in the past.

Under Old Business was a long discussion on health benefits and old-age pensions. For some months now the bleachery has been concerned on the subject of old-age pensions. Health benefits have been in operation for some time. The question was, should they pay the second week for accident cases, until the state started its payments the third week?

Under New Business the resignation of the editors of *Bleachery Life* was read and accepted. Acrimonious discussion as to the running of the *Bleachery Life*. Again we girls shivered. It was announced a certain rich man who recently died had left the Village Club House five hundred dollars—better write no letter of thanks until they got the money. Should the new handbook be printed by union labor at considerably greater expense, or by an open shop? Unanimously voted by union labor. More health-benefit discussions under New Business. It was voted to increase the Board of Management by two additional members—one operative, one from the employing side. Election then and there by a secret ballot. The operative from the "gray" room and singe house was elected over the man from the office force by two votes. Some further housing discussions, and at 11.15 P.M. the meeting adjourned.

"Say, I'm for coming every time." Perhaps we three girls will have started the style of outside attendance at the meetings.

Whether a wider participation of operatives, a deeper understanding of Industrial Democracy and the Partnership Plan, develops or not, certainly they are a long step on the way to some sort of permeation of interest. For the next morning early, my last morning, as I started work, I heard toothless old Mrs. Holley call over to aged Mrs. Owens, whose husband even these days is never sober: "Hi, Mrs. Owens, what do ye know habout hit! Hain't it

grand we got out over five million five hundred thousand yards last month?"

"I say it's grand," grinned Mrs. Owens. "More 'n a million over what we done month before."

"Hi say—over fifteen million the last three months. Hi say we're some bleachery, that's what *hi* say!"

VI

No. 1470, "Pantry Girl"

PERHAPS, more strictly speaking, instead of working with the working woman, it was working with the working man. Hotel work is decidedly co-educational! Except, indeed, for chambermaids and laundry workers, where the traditionally female fields of bed-making and washing have not been usurped by the male. Even they, those female chambermaids and launderers, see more or less of working menfolk during the day. So it might be thought then that hotel work offers an ideal field for the growth of such normal intercourse between the sexes as leads to happy matrimony. No need to depend on dance halls or the Subway to pick up a "fella." No need for external administrations from wholesome social workers whose aim is to enable the working man or woman to see something of the opposite sex.

Yet forever are there flies in ointments. Flossie was one of the salad girls in the main kitchen. Flossie was Irish, young, most of her teeth gone. Her sister had worked at our hotel two years earlier, then had sent for Flossie to come from Ireland. The sister was now married.

Innocently, interestedly, I asked, "To a man she knew here at the hotel?"

Flossie cast a withering eye upon me. "The good Lord save us! I should say not! And what decent girl would ever be marryin' the likes of a man who worked around a hotel? She couldn't do much worse! Just steer clear of hotel men, I'm tellin' ya. They're altogether too wise to be safe for any girl."

We were eating supper. The table of eight all nodded assent.

Too wise or not too wise—at least there is a—cordiality—a predisposition toward affection on the part of male hotel workers which tends to make one's outside male associates seem fearfully formal, if not stiffly antagonistic. If one grows accustomed to being called "Sweetheart," "Darling" on first sight, ending in the evening by the time-clock man's greeting of, "Here comes my little bunch of love!"—is it not plain that outside in the cruel world such words as a mere "How-do-you-do" or "Good morning" seem cold indeed?

What happens when a girl works three years in this affectionate atmosphere and then marries a plumber who hollers merely "say" at her?

Behind the scenes in a hotel—what is it all about? To find that out I poked around till the employment-office entrance of one of New York's biggest and newest hotels was discovered. There had been no "ad." in the Sunday paper which would give a hint that any hotel needed additional help. We took our chances.

Some twenty men waited in a little hallway, two women inside the little office. One of the women weighed at least two hundred and fifty, the other not a pound over ninety. Both could have been grandmothers, both wanted chamber work. The employment man spied me.

"What do you want?"

"A job."

"What kind of a job?"

"Anything but bein' chambermaid."

"What experience have you had in hotel work?"

"None, but lots in private homes. I'd like a job around the kitchen some place."

"Ever try pantry work?"

"Not in a hotel, but lots in private families. I can do that swell!" (What pantry work meant I hadn't the least idea—thought perhaps washing glasses and silverware.)

He put on his coat and hat and dashed upstairs. He always put on his coat *and* hat to go upstairs. In a few moments he dashed hurriedly back, followed by another man whose teeth were all worn down in the front. I learned later that he was an important steward.

He asked me all over again all the questions the first man had asked, and many more. He was in despair and impatient when he found I had not a single letter of recommendation from a single private family I had worked for. I could have written myself an excellent one in a few moments. Could I bring a letter back later in the day?

"Can you fix salads?"

"Sure!"

"You think you could do the job?"

"*Sure!*"

"Well, you look as if you could. Never mind the letter, but get one to have by you—comes in handy any job you want. Now about pay—I can't pay you what you been used to getting, at least not first month." (I'd mentioned nothing as to wages.) "Second month maybe more. First month all I can pay you is fifty and your meals. That all right?"

As usual, my joy at landing a job was such that any old pay was acceptable.

"Be back in two hours."

Just then the employment man called out to the hall filled with waiting men, "No jobs for any men this morning." I don't know what became of the old women.

I was back before my two hours were up, so anxious to begin. The employment man put on his hat and coat and dashed upstairs after my steward. Just incidentally, speaking of hats and coats, it can be mentioned that all this was in the middle of one of the hottest summers New York ever knew.

The steward led the way up one flight of iron stairs and into the main kitchen. Wasn't I all eyes to see what was what! If anyone is looking for a bit of muck-raking about the hinterland of restaurants, let him not bother to read farther. Nothing could have been cleaner than the kitchen conditions in our hotel. And orders up and down the line were

to serve *nothing* which was not absolutely as it should be.

In a corner of the main kitchen the steward turned me over to Bridget, who was to take me here, there, and the other place. By 11.30 A.M., I was back where I started from, only, thanks to aged Bridget and her none-too-sure leadings, I was clad in a white cap and white all-over apron-dress, and had had my lunch. Thereupon the steward escorted me to my own special corner of the world, where, indeed, I was to be lord of all I surveyed—provided my gaze fell not too far afield.

That particular corner was down one short flight of stairs from the main kitchen into a hustling, bustling, small and compact, often crowded, place where were prepared the breakfasts, lunches, and dinners of such folk who cared more for haste and less for style than the patrons of the main dining rooms. Our café fed more persons in a day than the other dining rooms combined. Outside we could seat five hundred at a time, sixty-five of those at marble counters, the rest at small tables. But our kitchen quarters could have been put in one corner of the spacious, airy upstairs main kitchen.

Through the bustle of scurrying and ordering waiters I was led to a small shelved-off compartment. Here I was to earn my fifty dollars a month from 1.30 P.M. to 9 P.M. daily except Sunday, with one-half hour off for supper. I was entitled to eat my breakfast and lunch at the hotel as well.

This first day, I was instructed to watch for two

hours the girl I was to relieve at 1.30. Her hours were from 6 in the morning to 1.30, which meant she got the brunt of the hard work—all of the breakfast and most of the lunch rush. To me fell the tail end of the lunch rush—up to about 2.15, and supper or dinner, which only occasionally could be spoken of as "rush" at all. I discovered later that we both got the same pay, although she had to work very much harder, and also she had been at our hotel almost two years, though only nine months at this special pantry job. Before that she had made toast, and toast only, upstairs in the main kitchen.

The first question Mary asked me that Monday morning was, "You Spanish?" No, I wasn't. Mary was a Spanish grass widow. Ten years she had been married, but only five of that time had she lived with her husband. Where was he? Back in Spain. "No good." She had come on to this country because it was too hard for a woman to make her way in Spain. She spoke little English, but with that little she showed that she was kindly disposed and anxious to help all she could. She herself had a stolid, untidy efficiency about her, and all the while, poor thing, suffered with pains in her stomach.

By the time 1.30 came around I knew what I had to do and could be left to my own devices. To the pantry girl of our café fell various and sundry small jobs. But the end and aim of her life had to be speed.

To the left of my little doorway was a small, deep sink. Next to the sink was a very large ice

chest. On the side of the ice chest next the sink hung the four soft-boiled-egg machines—those fascinating contrivances in which one deposited the eggs, set the notch at two, three, four minutes, according to the desires of the hurried guest without, sank the cup-shaped container in the boiling water, and never gave the matter another thought. At the allotted moment the eggs were hoisted as if by magic from out their boilings. Verily are the wonders of civilization manifold! The sink and the protruding ice chest filled the entire left side of my small inclosure. Along the entire right and front was a wide work-shelf. On this shelf at the right stood the electric toasting machine which during busy hours had to be kept going full blast.

"Toast for club!" a waiter sang out as he sped by, and zip! the already partially toasted bread went into the electric oven to be done so crisply and quickly that you could call out to that waiter, "Toast for club" before he could come back and repeat his ominous, "Toast for club!" at you. People who order club sandwiches seem always to be in a special hurry.

In the front corner just next the toaster stood the tray of bread sliced ready to toast, crusts off for dry or buttered toast, crusts on for "club," very thin slices for "toast Melba." Directly in front, and next the bread tray, came the tray filled with little piles of graham and milk crackers, seven in a pile. What an amazing number of folk order graham or milk crackers in a café! It seems unbelievable to one who has always looked upon a place furnishing

eatables outside a home as a chance to order somewhat indigestible food prepared entirely differently from what any home could accomplish. Yet I know it to be a fact that people seat themselves at a table or a counter in a more or less stylish café and order things like prunes or rhubarb and graham or milk crackers, and perhaps top off, if they forget themselves so far, with a shredded-wheat biscuit.

It is bad enough if a man feels called upon to act that way before 2 P.M. When he puts in an order for such after 6 in the evening—then indeed it is a case for tears. I would get the blues wondering whatever could ail adult humanity that it ordered shredded-wheat biscuits after dark.

Just above the counter holding the bread and crackers was the counter on which were placed the filled orders for the waiters to whisk away. It was but a step from there to my ice box. The orders it was my business to fill were for blackberries, blueberries, prunes, sliced oranges, rhubarb, grapefruit, whole oranges, apples, sliced peaches and bananas, muskmelons, and four kinds of cheese. These pretty well filled the upper half of the ice chest, together with the finished salads I kept ahead, say three of each, lettuce and tomato, hearts of lettuce, plain lettuce, and sliced tomatoes.

In the lower half stood the pitchers of orange and grape juice, jams and jellies for omelettes to be made down the line, olives, celery, lettuce, cucumbers, a small tub of oranges and a large bowl of sliced lemons. The lemons, lemons, lemons I had daily to

slice to complete the ice-tea orders! The next pantry-girl job I fill will be in winter when there is no demand for ice tea. I had also to keep on hand a bowl of American cheese cut the proper size to accompany pie, and together with toast and soft-boiled eggs and crackers and a crock of French dressing set in ice. Such was my kingdom, and I ruled it alone.

During slack hours it was easy, too easy. In rush hours you had to keep your head. Six waiters might breeze by in a line not one second apart, each calling an order, "Half a cantaloupe!" "Two orders of buttered toast!" "Combination salad!" (that meant romaine and lettuce leaves, shredded celery, sliced cucumbers, quartered tomatoes, green pepper, watercress, which always had to be made up fresh); "Sliced peaches!" (they could never be sliced in advance); "One order orange juice!" "Toast for club!" then how one's fingers sped!

The wonder of it was no one ever seemed to lose his patience or his temper. That is, nobody out our way. Maybe in the café there was some millionaire hastily en route to a game of golf who cursed the universe in general and the clumsy fingers of some immigrant pantry girl in particular. (Not so fearfully clumsy either.)

Between 2 and 2.30 the rush subsided, and that first day I caught my breath and took time to note the lay of the land.

My compartment came first, directly next the dishes. Next me was a beautiful chef with his white

cap set on at just the chef angle. He was an artist, with a youngster about fifteen as his assistant. Some day that youngster will be a more beautiful chef than his master and more of an artist. His master, I found out in my slack hours that first afternoon, was French, with little English at his command, though six years in this country. I know less French than he does English, but we got to be good friends over the low partition which separated us. There was nothing at all fresh or affectionate about that French chef. I showed my gratitude for that by coming over in the afternoon and helping him slice hot potatoes for potato salad while my floor got washed. Every day I made him a bow and said, "*Bon jour, Monsieur le Bon Chef,*" which may be no French at all. And every day he made me a bow back and said, "*Bon jour*" something or other, which I could tell was nice and respectful, but—I can't write it down. Monsieur Le Bon Chef made splendid cold works of art in jellies, and salads which belonged to another realm than my poor tomatoes and lettuce. Also, he and his assistant—the assistant was Spanish—made wonder sandwiches. They served jellied soups from their counter. Poor humble me would fill "One order graham crackers, little one!" But to Monsieur Le Bon Chef it would be "Two Cream of Cantaloupes!" "One chicken salad!" "One (our hotel) Plate!" (What a creation of a little of everything that was!) Monsieur Le Bon Chef taught me some tricks of the trade, but this is no treatise on domestic science.

I will tell you about Monsieur Le Bon Chef, though by no means did I learn this all my first afternoon. I only picked up a little here and there, now and then. He came to this country a French immigrant from near Toulouse six or so years ago, his heart full of dreams as to the opportunities in America. Likely as not we might now have to add that, after many searchings, he landed a job peeling potatoes at fifteen dollars a month. Monsieur Le Bon Chef was no Bon Chef at all when he landed—knew none of the tricks of "chefness" to speak of. His first day in America he sought out an employment office. Not a word of English could he speak. While the employment agent was just about to shake his head and say, "Nothing to-day," a friend, or at least a countryman, dashed up. "I have a job for you," said the countryman, and he led my Bon Chef to New York's most aristocratic hotel. Monsieur Le Bon Chef could not know there was a cooks' strike on. Down to the kitchen they led him, and for some weeks he drew ten dollars a day wages and his room and board right there at the hotel. To fall from Toulouse into a ten-dollar-a-day job! And when one knew scarce more than how to boil potatoes!

Of course, when the strike was over, there were no such wages paid as ten dollars a day. Nothing like that was he earning these six years later when he could make the beauteous works of art in jelly. I asked him if he liked his work. He shrugged his shoulders and brushed one side of his rather bristly blond mustache. "Na—no like so much—nothing in it

but the moaney—make good moaney." He shrugged his shoulders again and brushed up the other side of his mustache. "No good work just for tha moaney." You see he really is an artist. He was my quiet, nice friend, Monsieur Le Bon Chef. Indeed, one night he gave me a wondrously made empty cigar box with a little lock to it. "Ooh La-la!" I cried, and made a very deep bow, and said in what I'm sure was correct French—because Monsieur Le Bon Chef said it was—"Thank you very much!"

So then, all there was on our side of the kitchen was my little compartment and the not quite so little compartment of Monsieur Le Bon Chef, whose confines reached around the corner a bit. Around that corner and back a little way were two fat Porto-Rican women who washed glasses and spoke no English. Beyond them, at the right of the stairs going up to the main kitchen, were clean dishes. They came on dumb-waiters from some place either above or below.

At the left of the stairs were some five chefs of as many nationalities—Italian, Spanish, South American, French, Austrian, who filled hot orders, frying and broiling and roasting. Around the corner and opposite the Bon Chef and me were first the two cashiers, then my special friends, the Spanish dessert man and the Greek coffee and tea man. That is, they were the main occupants of their long compartment, but at the time of lunch rush at least six men worked there. Counting the chore persons of various sorts and not counting waiters, we had some thirty-eight

working in or for our café—all men but the two fat Porto-Rican glass washers and me.

Bridget, the dear old soul, came down that first afternoon to see how I was getting along. I had cleaned up spick and span after the Spanish woman—and a mess she always managed to leave. The water was out of the egg-boiling machine and that all polished; the heat turned off in the toasting machine and that wiped off; lemons sliced; celery "Julietted"; and I was peeling a tubful of oranges—in the way the steward had showed me—to be sliced by Spanish Mary for breakfast next morning.

"I'm sure gettin' along swell," I told Bridget.

"God bless ye," said my dear old guide, and picked her way upstairs again.

It was plain to see that down our way everybody's work eased up between 3.30 and 5. Then everyone visited about, exchanged newspapers, gossiped over counters. We changed stewards at three. Kelly, the easy-going, jovial (except at times) Irishman, took himself off, and a narrow-shouldered, small, pernickety German Jew came on for the rest of my time. When we closed up at nine he went to some other part of the hotel and stewarded.

My first afternoon Schmitz sauntered about to see what he could find out. Where did I live, what did I do evenings, what time did I get up mornings, what did I do Sundays? One question mark was Schmitz. One thing only he did not ask me, because he knew that. He always could tell what nationality a person was just by looking at him. So? Yes, and

he knew first thing what nationality I was. So? Yes, I was a Turk. But the truth of it was that at the hotel I was part Irish and part French and part Portuguese, but all I could talk was the Irish because my parents had both died while I was very young. Another day, my Greek friend, the coffee man, said he was sure there was a little Greek in me; and an Austrian waiter guessed right away I was a bit Austrian; and every Spaniard in the kitchen—and the hotel was full of them—started by talking a mile-a-minute Spanish at me. So a cosmopolitan, nondescript, melting-pot face is an asset in the labor world in our fair land—all nationalities feel friendly because they think you are a countryman. But a Turk—that stretched boundaries a bit.

For every question Schmitz asked me I asked him one back. His wife and daughter, sixteen, were in France for three months, visiting the wife's parents. As Schmitz's pernicketyness became during the next days more and more impossible to ignore, I solaced my harassed feelings with the thought of how much it must mean to Mrs. Schmitz to be away from Mr. Schmitz and his temperament and disposition for three blessed months. Perhaps the daughter, sixteen, had spoken of that phase of the trip to Mrs. Schmitz. Mrs. Schmitz, being a dutiful wife who has stood Mr. Schmitz at least, we surmise, some seventeen years, replied to such comments of her sixteen-year-old daughter, "Hush, Freda!"

At five minutes to five Schmitz graciously told me I might go up to my supper, though the law in the

statute books stood five. Everybody upstairs in the main kitchen, as I made my way to the service elevator, spoke kindly and asked in the accents of at least ten different nationalities how I liked my job. Hotel folk, male and female, are indeed a friendly lot.

The dining room for the help is on the ballroom floor, which is a short flight of steps above the third. It is the third floor which is called the service floor, where our lockers are, and the chambermaids' sleeping quarters, and the recreation room.

There are, it seems, class distinctions among hotel help. The chefs eat in a dining room of their own. Then, apparently next in line, came our dining room. I, as pantry girl, ranked a "second officer." We had round tables seating from eight to ten at a table, table cloths and cafeteria style of getting one's food. The chefs were waited upon. In our dining room ate the bell boys, parlor maids, laundry workers, seamstresses, housekeepers, hotel guards and police, the employment man, pantry girls—a bit of everything. To reach our dining room we had to pass through the large room where the chambermaids ate. They had long bare tables, no cloths, and sat at benches without backs.

As to food, our dining room but reflected the state of mind any and every hotel dining room reflects, from the most begilded and bemirrored down. Some thought the food good, some thought it awful, some thought nothing about it at all, but just sat and ate. One thing at least was certain—there was enough.

For dinner there was always soup, two kinds of meat, potatoes, vegetables, dessert, ice tea, milk, or coffee. For supper there was soup again, meat or fish, potatoes, a salad, and dessert, and the same variety of drinkables to choose from. Once I was late at lunch and ate with the help's help. The woman who dished up the vegetables was in a fearful humor that day. People had been complaining about the food. "They make me sick!" she grunted. "They jus' oughta try the —— Hotel. I worked in their help's dinin' room for four years and we hardly ever seen a piece of meat, and as for eggs—I'm tellin' ya a girl was lucky if she seen a egg them four years."

The people in our dining room were like the people in every dining room: some were sociable and talked to their neighbors, some were not sociable at all. There was no regular way of seating. Some meals you found yourself at a table where all was laughter and conversation. The next meal, among the same number of people, not one word would be spoken. "Pass the salt" would grow to sound warm and chummy.

Half an hour was the time allowed everyone for meals. With a friendly crowd at the table that half hour flew. Otherwise, there was no way of using up half an hour just eating. And then what?

After a couple of days, some one mentioned the recreation room. Indeed, what's in a name? Chairs were there, two or three settees, a piano, a victrola, a Christy picture, a map of South America, the dying soldier's prayer, and three different sad and colored

pictures of Christ. Under one of these was pinned a slip of paper, and in homemade printing the worthy admonition:

"No cursing no stealing when tempted look on his kindly face."

There were all these things, but no girls. Once in a while a forlorn bunch of age would sit humped in a chair, now and then a victrola record sang forth its worn contents, twice the piano was heard. After some ten days my large fat friend from the help's pantry informed me that she and I weren't supposed to be there —the recreation room was only for chambermaids and like as not any day we'd find the door locked. Sure enough, my last day at the hotel I sneaked around in the middle of the afternoon, as usual, to see what gossip I could pick up, and the door was locked. But I made the recreation room pay for itself as far as I was concerned. Every day I managed to pick up choice morsels of gossip there that was grist to my mill.

After my first supper I could find nothing to do or no one to talk to, so back I went to work—feeling a good deal like teacher's pet. About four o'clock it was my business to tell Schmitz what supplies we were out of and what and how much we'd need for supper. When I got back from supper there were always trays of food to be put in the ice chest, salads to be fixed, blackberries to dish out, celery to wash, and the like. By the time that was done supper was on in our café. That is, for some it was supper; for others, judging by the looks of the trays which passed hurriedly by

my compartment, stopping only long enough for sliced lemon for the ice tea, it was surely dinner. Dinner *de luxe* now and then! Such delectable dishes! How did anybody ever know their names enough to order them?

From 6 to 7.30 was the height of the supper rush. What a variable thing our patrons made of it! Some evenings there would be a regular run on celery salads, then for four nights not a single order. Camembert cheese would reign supreme three nights in succession—not another order for the rest of the week. Sometimes it seemed as if the whole of creation sat without, panting for sliced tomatoes. The next night stocked up in advance so as to keep no one waiting—not a human being looked at a tomato.

At eight o'clock only stragglers remained to be fed, and my job was to clear out the ice chest of all but two of each dish, send it upstairs to the main kitchen, and then start scrubbing house. Schmitz let it be known that one of the failings of her whose place I was now filling, the one who was asked to leave the Friday night before the Monday morning I appeared, was that she was not clean enough. At first, a year and a half ago, she was cleanly and upright—that is, he spoke of such uprightness as invariably follows cleanliness. But as time wore on her habits of cleanliness wore off, and there were undoubtedly corners in the ice box where her waning-in-enthusiasm fingers failed to reach. But on a night when the New York thermometer ranges up toward the nineties it is a pure and unadulterated joy to labor

inside an ice box. I scrubbed and rinsed and wiped until Schmitz almost looked approving. Only it was congenital with Schmitz that he never really showed approval of anything or anybody. Schmitz was the kind (poor Mrs. Schmitz with her three months only of freedom) who always had to change everything just a little. There would echo down the line an order, "One Swiss cheese, little one" (that referred to me, not the cheese). Schmitz would stroll over from where he was trying to keep busy watching everyone at once, enter the very confines of my compartment, and stand over me while I sliced that Swiss cheese. It was always either too big, in which case he took the knife from my hands and sliced off one-sixteenth of an inch on one end; or too small, in which case Schmitz would endeavor to slice a new piece altogether. The chances were it would end in being even smaller than the slice I cut. In that case, Schmitz would say, "Led it go, anyway." And then, because he would always be very fair, he stood and explained at length why the piece was too big, if it were too big, or too small, if too small. "You know, it's dis vay—" My Gawd! not once, but every night. There was always one slice too many or too few on the sliced-tomato order. Schmitz would say, "There must be five slices." The next time I put on five slices Schmitz stuck that nose of his around the waiter's shoulder.

"Hey, vhat's dat? Only five slices? De guests won't stand for dat, you know. Dey pay good money here. Put anoder slice on."

I was wont to get fearfully exasperated at times.

"But," I remonstrated, "last time I had on six and you told me to put on five!"

"Yes, yes, but I expect you to use your common sense!"

That was his invariable comeback. And always followed by his patient:

"You see, it's dis vay— If you put on too much the hotel, vhy, dey lose money, and of course you see it's dis vay: naturally" (that was a pet word of Schmitz's), "naturally the hotel don't vant to lose money—you can see dat for yourself. Now on the odder hand if you don't put on enough, vhy of course you see it's dis vay, naturally a guest vants to get his money's vorth, you can see dat for yourself—you've just got to use your common sense, you can see dat for yourself." Not once, but day after day, night after night. Poor, poor Mrs. Schmitz! Verily there are worse things than first-degree murder and intoxication.

But for all that Schmitz deigned not to allow it to be known that my scrubbings found favor in his sight, my own soul approved of me. The shelves and the sink I scrubbed. Then every perishable article in my ice chest or elsewhere got placed upon trays to go upstairs. By this time it was two minutes to nine. Schmitz, always with his hands clasped behind him, except when he was doing over everything I did, said, "You can go now."

Upstairs among the lockers on the third floor the temperature was like that of a live volcano,

only nothing showed any signs of exploding. Fat women who could speak little or no English were here and there puffily dismantling, exchanging the hotel work-uniform for street garments. Everyone was kindly and affectionate. One old Irishwoman came up while I was changing my clothes.

"Well, dearie, and how did it go?"

"Sure it went swell."

"That's good. The Lord bless ye. But there's one bit of advice I must be giving ye. There's one thing you must take care of now. I'm tellin' ye, dearie, you must guard your personality! I'm tellin' ye, there 're the men y' know, but guard y' personality!"

I thanked her from the bottom of my heart and said I'd guard it, surest thing she knew.

"Oh, the good Lord and the Virgin Mary bless ye, child!" And she patted me affectionately on the back.

Indeed, I had been getting affectionate pats most of the time, though the majority of them were from the male help. The composite impression of that first day as I took my way home on the sticky Subway was that the world was a very affectionate place, nor was I quite sure just what to do about it.

The second morning I was given a glimpse of what can be done about it. As I was waiting for the elevator on the service floor to be taken down to work, a very attractive girl came along and immediately we became chummy. She had been at the hotel three weeks; her job was to cut fruit. Had she done this sort of work long? Not in this country, but in

Europe. Just one year had she been in America. At that moment two youths passed. I saw nothing, but quick as a flash my new friend flared up, "You fresh guy—keep your hands to yourself!" So evidently that's the way it's done. I practiced it mentally. "Lots o' fresh guys round here," I sniffed. "You said it," muttered the still ruffled fruit cutter.

Downstairs, Kelly was waiting with a welcoming nod—Kelly, the unpernickety steward. Everyone was as friendly as if we had been feeding humanity side by side these many years. During the rush the waiters called out as they sped by: "Hi there, little one!" "There's the girlie!" "Ah there, sweetheart!" Verily the world is an affectionate place. If a waiter had an order to give he passed the time of day as he gave it and as he collected his order.

"And how's the little girl to-day?"

"Tiptop—and yourself?"

"A little low in spirits I was to-day until I seen you'd come—an' then. You love me as much as you did yesterday?"

"Move on there. W'at y' a-doin' talkin' to my girl! Now, honey, I'm tellin' you this here guy is too fresh for any lady. I'd like one order of romaine lettuce, bless your sweet heart, if it won't be tirin' your fingers too much. That's the dearie—I'm back in a moment."

Across the way, arms resting on the counter, head ducked under the upper shelf, leaned a burly red-headed helper to the Greek.

Every time the pantry girl looked his way he

beamed and nodded and nodded and beamed. "How you lak?" "Fine!" More beams and nods. Soon a waiter slipped a glass of ice coffee, rich in cream and sugar, under my counter. Beams and nods fit to burst from the assistant coffee man across the way. Beams and nods from the pantry girl. Thus every day. Our sole conversation was, "How you lak?" "Fine!" He said the rest with coffee.

With the lunch rush over, Kelly sneaked around my entrance and jerked his head sidewise. That meant, naturally, that I was to approach and harken unto what he had to say. When Kelly imparted secrets—and much of what Kelly had to impart was that sort of information where he felt called upon to gaze about furtively to make sure no one was overhearing—when he had matters of weight then to impart he talked down in his boots and a bit out of the corner of his mouth.

"Say, kid"—Kelly jerked his head—"want to tell you about this eatin' business. Y'know, ain't no one supposed to eat nothin' on this floor. If the boss catches ya, it's good-by dolly. Sign up over the door sayin' you'll be dismissed *at once* if you eat anything—see? But I'm givin' ya a little tip—see? I don't care how much ya eat—it's nothin' to me. I say eat all ya got a mind to. Only for Gawd's sake don't let the Big Boss catch ya." (The Big Boss was the little chief steward, who drew down a fabulous salary and had the whole place scared to death.) "See—pull a cracker box out so and put what ya got to eat behind it this way, then ya can sit down and

sorta take your time at it. If the boss does come by—it's behind the cracker box and you should worry! Have a cup of coffee?"

I was full up of coffee from my gentleman friend across the way, so declined Kelly's assistance in obtaining more. Every day, about 2.30, Kelly got in a certain more or less secluded corner of my compartment and ate a bit himself. "Been almost fired a couple of times for doin' this—this place is full o' squealers—gotta watch out all the time. Hell of a life I say when a fella has to sneak around to eat a bit of food."

That second afternoon, Kelly stopped in the middle of a gulp of coffee.

"Say, w'at t' hell's a girl like you workin' for, anyhow? Say, don't you know you could get married easy as—my Gawd! too easy. Say, you could pick up with one of these waiters just like that! They're good steady fellas, make decent pay. You could do much worse than marry a waiter. I'm tellin' ya there's no sense to a girl like you workin'."

That was an obsession with Kelly. He drilled it into me daily. Kelly himself was a settled married man. Of his state we talked often. I asked Kelly the very first day if he ever went to Coney Island.

"Ustta—'ain't been for ten years."

"Why not for ten years?"

Kelly looked at me out of the corner of his eyes. "Got married ten years ago."

"Well, and w'at of it? Don't you have no more fun?"

"You said it! I'm tellin' ya there's no more fun. Gee! I sure don't know myself these ten years. I was the kind of a fella"—here Kelly was moved in sheer admiration to do a bit of heavy cursing—"I was the kind of fella that did everything—I'm tellin' ya, *everything*. Bet there ain't a thing in this world I 'ain't done at least once, and most of 'em a whole lot more 'n that. An' now—look at me now! Get up at four every mornin', but Sundays, get down here at six" (Kelly was a suburbanite), "work till three, git home, monkey with my tools a bit or play with the kids, eat dinner, sit around a spell, go to bed."

A long pause. "Ain't that a hell of a life, I'm askin' ya?"

Another pause in which Kelly mentally reviewed his glowing past. He shook his head and smiled a sad smile. "If you could 'a' seen me ten years ago!"

Kelly told me the story of his life more or less in detail some days later. I say advisedly "more or less." Considering the reputation he had given himself, I am relieved to be able to note that he must have left some bits out, though goodness knows he put enough in. But Kelly's matrimonial romance must be told.

Kelly went with a peach of a girl in the years gone by—swellest little kid—gee! he respected that girl—never laid hands on her. She wanted to go back to the old country for a visit, so he paid her way there and back—one hundred and sixty-five dollars it had cost him. Coming home from a ball where Kelly had been manager—this at 4 A.M.—a remark of the

girl's led Kelly to suspect she was not the stainless bit of perfection his love had pictured. So after three years of constant devotion Kelly felt that he had been sold out. He turned around and said then and there to his fair one, "You go to hell!" He never laid eyes on her again.

A few years later Kelly met an American girl. He went with her three years, was making seventy-five dollars a month, had saved eight hundred and seventy-six dollars, and in addition possessed one hundred and ten dollars in life insurance. So he asked the lady to marry him. Y' know w'at she said to Kelly? Kelly leaned his shaggy mop of hair my way. She said, "I won't marry nobody on seventy-five dollars a month!" Again Kelly's manhood asserted itself. Do you know w'at Kelly said to her? He says, says he, once more, "You go to hell!" He quit.

Whereupon Kelly drew out every cent he possessed and sailed for Europe. When he landed again in New York City, d' y'know how much money Kelly had in his pocket? Thirty-five cents. Then he went West for seven or eight years, and tore up the country considerable, Kelly did. He came back to New York again, again minus cash. A few days after his return the girl of eight years before met him by appointment at the Grand Central Station. What d' y'know? She asked Kelly to marry her —just like that. Heck! by that time Kelly didn't give a darn one way or the other. She bought the ring, she hired the minister, she did the whole busi-

ness. Kelly married her—that's the wife he's got right now.

One of Kelly's steady, dependable waiters approached about 5 P.M. "Say, girl, I like you!" Of course, the comeback for that now, as always, was, "Aw go-an!"

"Sure, I like you. Say, how about goin' out this evening with me? We'll sure do the old town!"

"I say, you sound like as if you got all of twenty-five cents in your pocket!"

He leaned way over my counter.

"I got twenty-five dollars, and it's yours any time you say the word!"

It's words like that which sometimes don't get said.

For supper that night I sat at a table with a housekeeper, a parlor maid, and a seamstress, and listened to much talk. Mainly, it was a discussion of where the most desirable jobs were to be had in their respective lines. There was complete unanimity of opinion. Clubs headed the list, and the cream of cream were men's clubs. The housekeeper and parlor maid together painted a picture which would lead one to conclude that the happiest women in all New York City were the housekeepers in men's clubs. The work was light, they were well treated—it was a job for anyone to strive for. The type of men or women in clubs, they remarked, was ahead of what you'd draw in any hotel.

The parlor maid, an attractive, gray-haired woman—indeed, all three were gray-haired—was very pleased with her job at our hotel. She slept there

and loved it. The rooms were so clean—your towels were changed daily just as for the guests. Sure she was very contented. If her mother were only alive—she died two years ago—she'd be the happiest woman in the world, she just knew it. But every single morning she woke up with an empty feeling in her heart for the longings after her mother.

My diary of Thursday of that first week starts: "The best day since I've been trying jobs—Glory be, it was rich!" And pages follow as to the wonders of that one day—wonders to me, who was after what the workers themselves think about the universe in general.

When I found how hard the Spanish woman I relieved at 1.30 had to work, how much more rushed she was from 6 to 1.30 than ever I was from 1.30 to 9, and when I learned, in addition, that she received no more pay for all her extra labors, I told her I would come early every day and help her during the rush. This is all good psychology and I give it for what it is worth. The first few days, this Thursday being one of them, she was very grateful—spoke often of how much it helped to have me there early. My last morning during my two weeks of the hotel job I was so rushed with final errands to do before leaving New York that it was impossible for me to arrive at work before 1.30, my regular and appointed time. The Spanish woman knew it was my last day. But she was so put out to think I had not arrived early

ıe whisked out of that compartment the second
ed, only taking time to give me one fearful
ımistakable glare. Kelly caught the remnants
ıs she swung by him. He sauntered over to
unter. "Say, the nerve of some people!"
t Thursday noon, I ate with the workers in the
kitchen. So much talk! First there was a
ı fit to rend the rafters. One of the Irish girls
ed herself down to eat and raved on about
an Armenian girl, and something or other
had done or hadn't done with the silverware.
one was frank as to what each thought about
Armenian stock was very low that day.
hen Lizzie appeared, a very attractive, neat
ıo had been friendly and kind to me. I had no
was she about whose character such blusterous
were being spoken. With Lizzie and the Irish
ce to face—Heaven help us! I expected to see
at each other's throats. Such talk! Finally
r Irish girl turned to the Armenian. "Why
do you get so mad over it all, now?" Lizzie
d, gave the second Irish girl a quizzical look.
a smile spread over her face. She gave a
huckle. "Ho! Why t'hell?" We all laughed
ughed, and the fight was off.
eems Lizzie was known far and wide for her
r. She had been fired from waiting on the
ecause she let it loose in their dining room one
Now they were trying her out up at our end of
vice floor. Minnie, the oldest Irish woman at
ble and in a decidedly ruffled mood that day,

claimed it was the Armenian in her. "They're all like that. Shure, I got a Armenian helper—that kid over there. Wait till he says one word more to me. I'll bust a plate on his head and kick his prostrate form into the gutter. It 'll be a happy day in my life!"

They all asked me about my work and how I liked it. Evidently mine was a job high in favor. "Shure you're left alone and no one to be under your feet or botherin' with y' every minute of the day. You're yo'r own boss."

The talk got around to the strike at the Hotel McAlpin of a few years ago. It was for more pay. The strike was lost. I asked why. "Shure, they deserved to lose it. Nobody hung together."

We discussed domestic service. Every day at that hotel I wondered why any girl took work in a private home if she could possibly get a hotel job. Here was what could be considered by comparison with other jobs, good pay, plus three nourishing meals a day, decent hours, and before and after those hours freedom. In many cases, also, it meant a place to sleep. There was a chance for talk and companionship with one's kind during the day. Every chance I got I asked a girl if she liked working in a private home, or would change her hotel job if she got a chance. The only person who was not loud in decrying private service was Minnie during this special Thursday lunch. But Minnie was so sore on the world that day. I do believe she would have objected to the Virgin Mary, had the subject come up. Minnie

had worked years in private families and only six years in hotels. She wished she'd never seen the inside of a hotel.

That same night at the supper table the subject came up again before an entirely different crowd. Three at the table had tried domestic service. Never again! Why? Always the answer was the same. "Aw, it's the feeling of freedom ya never get there, and ya do get it in a hotel." One sweet gray-haired woman told of how she had worked some years as cook in a swell family where they kept lots of servants. She got grand wages, and naïvely she added, you get a chance to make lots on the side, o' course. I asked her if she meant tips from guests. Oh no! She meant what you made off tradespeople. Don't you see, if you got the butcher bill up so high, you got so much off the butcher, and the same with the grocer and the rest. She had a sister not cooking long who made over one hundred dollars a month, counting what she got off tradespeople. It is a perfectly accepted way of doing, mentioned with no concern.

But on the whole, that supper table agreed that domestic service was a good deal like matrimony. If you got a good family, all right; but how many good families were there in the world? One woman spoke of working where they'd made a door mat of her. Barely did she have food enough to eat. There were four in the family. When they had chops the lady of the house ordered just four, which meant she who cooked the chops got none.

After lunch this full Thursday I rushed to assist Mary. I loved going down the stairs into our hot scurry of excitement. Indeed, it was seeing behind the scenes. And always the friendly nods from everyone, even though the waiters especially looked ready to expire in pools of perspiration. At Monsieur Le Bon Chef's counter some sticky waiter had ordered a roast-beef sandwich. The heat had made him skeptical. "Call that beef?" The waiter next him glared at him with a chuckle. "An' must we then always lead in the cow for you to see?" A large Irishman breezed up to my Bon Chef. "Two beef à la modes. Make it snappy, chief. Party's in a hurry. Has to catch the five-thirty train"—this at one o'clock. Everyone good-natured, and the perspiration literally rolling off them.

Most of the waiters were Irish. One of them was a regular dude—such immaculateness never was. He was the funny man of the place, and showed off for my special benefit, for I made no bones of the fact that he amused me highly. He was a very chippy-looking waiter—pug nose, long upper lip. When he ordered ice coffee he sneaked up on the Greek à la Bill Hart, ready to pull a gun on him. He had two names at his disposal and used one or the other with every order, no matter who the chef was. In a very deep tone of voice, it was either, "James, custard pie!" or, "Dinsmore, one veal cutlet." But to me it was always: "Ah there, little one! Toast, I say *toast*. Dry, little one. Ah yes! There be them

who out of force of habit inflicted upon them take even their toast dry. You get me, little one?"

He was especially immaculate this Thursday. I guessed he must be taking at least three ladies out that evening. He looked at me out of the corner of his eyes. "*Three*, little one, this hot night? Winter time, yes, a man can stand a crowd about him, but not to-night. No. To-night, little one, I take but one lady. It allows for more circulation of air. And you will be that One?"

The Greek this hot Thursday became especially friendly. He twirled his heavy black mustache and carried on an animated broken-English conversation most of the afternoon. Incidentally, he sent over one ice coffee with thick cream and two frosted chocolates.

The little Spaniard next to him, he who served pies and ice cream and more amazing desserts—he, too, became very friendly. There was nothing the least fresh about the little Spaniard. He mostly leaned on his counter, in moments of lull in trade, and when I so much as looked his way, he sighed heavily. Finally he made bold to converse. I learned that he had been two years in this country, eight months at his present job. When I asked him how he spent his off time, he replied in his very broken English that he knew nobody and went nowhere. "It is no pleasure to go alone." He rooms with an American family on the East Side. They are very nice. For some years he had been in the printing trade in South America; there was something to a

job like that. But in New York he did not know enough English to be a printer, and so, somehow, he found himself dishing pies and ice cream at our hotel.

Later on that day he asked me, "Why are you so happy?"

Indeed I was very cheerful and made no secret of it. I had sung every song I knew and then whistled them all as I worked. But Schmitz, who surely had never smiled in all his life, could stand it no longer. "You better not make so much noise," he said. "You see, it's dis vay—" Poor Schmitz, he had a miserable time of it that afternoon. For my expressions of contentment with the world had spread. Unconsciously a chef would whistle a bit here as he mixed his gravy ingredients, another there as he minced chicken, yet another in still another direction as he arranged a bowl of vegetables. Schmitz's head swirled first in one direction, then in another. Aching he was to reduce the universe to his perpetual state of gloom. But chefs he stood in awe of. He dared silence only me, and every so often I forgot.

So the Spaniard asked me why I was so happy. I had no reason. Only a great multitude of reasons why there was no excuse to be anything else, but I did not go into that. He would know, though.

"What did you do last night?"

"Ho!" I laughed at him, "rode home on the top of a bus!"

A bit later a piece of folded paper landed almost in my French dressing. It was a note from the Spaniard: "Will you go riding with me to-night?" I

wrote on the bottom of the paper: "Not to-night. Perhaps next week, yes?" A few moments later a folded menu landed on the floor. On the back was written: "I will be very pleased whenever you can or wish. Could it be Sunday? I hope you wouldn't take it amiss my asking you this. Frank."

I really wanted to take that bus ride with Frank. It still worries me that I did not. He was such a lonesome person.

Then there was the tall, lean, dark Irish waiter I called Mr. O'Sullivan. He was a continual joy to my heart and gave me cause for many a chuckle. A rebel, was Mr. O'Sullivan. I heard Kelly call him down twice for growling at what he considered inexcusable desires in the matter of food or service on the part of patrons by telling Mr. O'Sullivan it was none of his —— business. But I loved to listen to Mr. O'Sullivan's growlings, and once he realized that, he used to stop at my counter, take extra long to collect three slices of lemon, and tell me his latest grievance. To-night, this Thursday, he was sputtering.

"Shure and de y'know what now? I've two parties out there want finger bowls. *Finger bowls!*" sputtered Mr. O'Sullivan.

"Shure an' it's a long ways from the sight of finger bowls them two was born. It had better be a pail apiece they'd be askin' for. Finger bowls indeed!" Mr. O'Sullivan had gotten down to a mumble. "Shure an' they make me *sick!*"

Mr. O'Sullivan knew that I gave ear to his senti-

ments upon such matters as old parties, male or female, who must needs order special kinds of extra digestible bread, and usually that bread must in addition be toasted. While it was toasting, Mr. O'Sullivan voiced his views on Old Maids with Indigestion. Much of it does not bear repeating. When the toast was done, Mr. O'Sullivan would hold out his plate with the napkin folded ready for the toast. "Shure an yo'r the sweetest child my eyes ever looked upon" (Mr. O'Sullivan would say just the same thing in the same way to a toothless old hag of ninety). "Mind you spare yo'rself now from both bein' an old maid and sufferin' to the point where y' can't eat plain white bread!"

This particular Thursday I had even found some one to talk to in the recreation room when I sneaked up at three o'clock. There came a time when Schmitz's patience was strained over my regular disappearance from about 3 to 3.30. There was absolutely nothing for me to do just then in my own line, so I embraced that opportunity daily to take my way to the recreation room and see what pickings I could gather up. But one afternoon Schmitz's face bore an extra-heavy frown. "Say, what you do every day that keeps you from your work all this time? Don't you know that ain't no way to do? Don't you understand hotel work is just like a factory? Everybody must be in his place all day and not go wandering off!"

"Ever work in a factory?" I asked Schmitz.

He deigned no answer.

"Well, then, I'm telling *you* I have, and hotel work ain't like a factory at *all*."

"Vell, you see it's dis vay—naturally—"

This Thursday up in the recreation room I found an ancient scrubwoman, patched and darned to pieces, with stringy thin hair, and the fat, jovial Irishwoman from the help's pantry. The three of us had as giddy a half hour as anyone in all New York. We laughed at one another's jokes till we almost wept, and forgot all about the thermometer. The fat Irishwoman had worked at the hotel two years, the scrubwoman almost that long. Both "lived out." They, too, informed me I had one of the best jobs in the hotel—nobody messin' in with what you're doin'—they leave y'alone. The fat one had worked some time in the linen room, but preferred pantry work. The linen room was too much responsibility—had to count out aprons and towels and things in piles of ten and tie them, and things like that—made a body's head swim.

Realizing Schmitz's growing discomfort, I finally had to tear myself away. The fat Irishwoman called after me, "Good-by, dear, and God bless y'."

Upstairs at supper that night I had the luck to land again at a talkative table. We discussed many things—Ireland, for one. One girl was she who had come two years ago from Ireland and did salads in the main kitchen. Such a brogue! An Irish parlor maid had been long years in this country. The two asked many questions of each other about their life in the Old Country. "Shure," sighed one, "I

love every stick and every stone and tree and blade of grass in Ireland!" "Shure," sighed the other, "an' that's just the way I feel about it, too!"

Everyone at the table liked working at our hotel. According to them, the hotel was nice, the girls nice, hours nice.

The subject of matrimony, as ever, came up. Not a soul at the table but what was ag'in' it. Why should a woman get married when she can support herself? All she'd get out of it would be a pack of kids to clean up after, and work that never ended. Of course, the concession was eventually made, if you were sure you were gettin' a good man— But how many good men were there in the world? And look at the divorces nowadays! Why try it at all? One girl reported as statistically accurate that there was one divorce in the United States to every four marriages. "You don't say!" was the chorus.

The subject changed to summer hotels. One woman had worked last summer as a waitress at one of the beaches. That was the swellest job ever— just like a vacation! All summer she had two tables only to wait on, two persons at a table. Each table had tipped her five dollars a week. Next summer we all must try it.

The minutes flew by too fast that supper. Before I knew it, 5.30 had come around, and by the time I was downstairs again it was five minutes past my appointed half hour. Poor, poor Schmitz! And yet lucky Schmitz. It must have caused his soul much inner satisfaction to have a real honest-to-

goodness grievance to complain about. (You see, he could not go up for his supper until I came down from mine.) Schmitz upbraided me, patiently, with explanations. Every single night from then on, when at five he would tell me I could go upstairs, he always added, "And be sure you're back at half past five!" In natural depravity of spirit, it was my delight one night to be able to sneak down at about 5.25 without being seen by Schmitz. Then I shrank into a corner of my compartment, out of his line of vision, and worked busily on my evening chores. At 5.30, Schmitz began his anxious scanning of our large clock. By 5.40 he was a wreck and the clock had nearly been glared off its hinges. Then it was a waiter called out to me the first evening order. With the crucified steps of a martyr, a ten-minute-hungry martyr at that, Schmitz made his way over to fill that order. And there I was, busily filling it myself! Of course, I hope I have made it clear that Schmitz was the kind who would say, "I knew she was there all along."

The rush of this particular Thursday night! More lettuce had to be sent for in the middle of the evening, more tomatoes, more blackberries, more cantaloupes, more bread for toast. There was no stopping for breath. In the midst of the final scrubbings and cleanings came an order of "One combination salad, Sweetheart!" That done and removed and there sounded down the way, "One cantaloupe, Honey!" Back the waiter came in a moment. "The old party says it's too ripe." There were only two

left to choose from. "Knock his slats in if he don't like that, the old fossil." In another moment the waiter was back again with the second half. "He says he don't want no cantaloupe, anyhow. Says he meant an order of Philadelphia cream cheese."

But nine o'clock came round and somehow the chores were all done and Schmitz nodded his regal head ever so little—his sign for, "Madam, you may take your departure," and up I flew through the almost deserted main kitchen, up the three flights to the service floor, down four flights to the time-clock floor (elevators weren't always handy), to be greeted by my friend the time-clock man with his broad grin and his, "Well, if here ain't my little bunch o' love!"

If he and Schmitz could only have gotten mixed a bit in the original kneading. . . .

By Saturday of that week I began my diary: "Goodness! I couldn't stand this pace long—waiters are too affectionate." I mention such a matter and go into some detail over their affection here and there, because it was in no sense personal. I mean that any girl working at my job, provided she was not too ancient and too toothless and too ignorant of the English language, would have been treated with equal enthusiasm. True, a good-looking Irishman did say to me one evening, "I keep thinkin' to myself durin' the day, what is there about you that's different. I shure like it a lot what it is, but I just can't put my finger on it." I used as bad grammar

as the next; I appeared, I hoped, as ignorant as the next. Yet another Irishman remarked, "I don't know who you are or where you came from or where you got your education, but you shure have got us all on the run!" But any girl with the least wits about her would have had them on the run. She was the only girl these men got a chance to talk to the greater part of the day.

But what if a girl had a couple of years of that sort of thing? Or does she get this attention only the first couple of weeks of the couple of years, anyhow? Does a waiter grow tired of expressing his affection before or after the girl grows tired of hearing it? I could not help but feel that most of it was due to the fact that perhaps among those waiters and such girls as they knew a purely friendly relationship was practically unknown. Sex seemed to enter in the first ten minutes. Girls are not for friends—they're to flirt with. It was for the girl to set the limits; the man had none.

But eight and one-half hours a day of parrying the advances of affectionate waiters—a law should be passed limiting the cause for such exertion to two hours a day, no overtime. Nor have I taken the gentle reader into my confidence regarding the Spanish chef in the main kitchen. He did the roasting. I had to pass his stove on my way to the elevators. At which he dropped everything, wiped his hands on his apron, and beamed from ear to ear until I got by. One day he dashed along beside me and directed an outburst of Spanish into my ear. When I shook my

head and shrugged my shoulders and got it into his head that I was not a countrywoman, his dismay was purely temporary. He spoke rather flowery English. Would I walk up the stairs with him? No, I preferred the elevator. He, did too. I made the most of it by asking him questions too fast for him to ask me any. He was a tailor by trade, but business had been dull for months. In despair he had taken to roasting. Some six months he had been at our hotel. He much preferred tailoring, and in two months he would be back at his trade in a little shop of his own, making about fifty to seventy-five dollars a week. And then he got in his first question.

"Are you married?"

"No."

"Could I then ask you to go out with me some evening?"—all this with many beams and wipings of hands on his apron.

Well, I was very busy.

But one evening. Oh, just one evening—surely one evening.

Well, perhaps—

To-night, then?

No, not to-night.

To-morrow night?

No, no night this week or next week, but perhaps week after next.

Ah, that is so long, so long!

There was no earthly way to get to the stairs or elevators except by his stove. I came to dread it. Always the Spanish ex-tailor dropped everything

with a clatter and chased after me. I managed to pass his confines at greater and greater speed. Invariably I heard his panting, "Listen! Listen!" after me, but I tore on, hoping to get an elevator that started up before he could make it.

One day the Spaniard, this tall thin roaster with the black mustache, was waiting as I came out of the locker room.

"Listen! Listen!" he panted, from force of habit. "Next week is still so very long off."

It so happened it was my last day at the hotel. I told him I was leaving that night.

"Oh, miss!" He looked really upset. "Then you will go out to-night with me. Surely to-night."

No, I had a date.

To-morrow night.

No, I had another date.

Sunday—oh, Sunday, just one Sunday.

Sunday I had two dates.

I should be able to flatter my female soul that at least he forgot the seasoning that night in his roasts.

Downstairs that first Saturday the little quiet Spaniard of the pies and ice cream screwed up his courage, crossed over to my precinct, leaned his arms on my front counter, and said, "If I had a wife like you I would be happy all the rest of my life!"

Having delivered himself of those sentiments, he hastily returned to his pies and ice cream.

The Greek coffee man would take me to a show that night.

Saturday, to my surprise, was a slack day in the

café business. Trade is always light. Sunday our kitchen closed shop. Another reason why my job held allurements. I was the only girl to get Sunday off. Also, because we were the only department in the hotel to close down altogether, it seems we were wont to have an annual picnic. Alas that I had to miss it!

Plans were just taking shape, too, for this year's event. Last year they motored over to Long Island. Much food, many drinks. It was a rosy memory. This year Kelly wanted a hay ride. Kelly, he of the highly colored past, even so contended there was nothing in the world like the smell of hay.

There was no fun to the supper that Saturday night. I sat at a table with a deaf girl, two dirty men, and a fat, flabby female with pop eyes, and not a one of them acted as if he possessed the ability to speak. Except the deaf girl, who did tell me she couldn't hear.

So I ate hastily and made for the recreation room. For the first time the piano was in use. A chambermaid, surrounded by four admiring fellow-workers, was playing "Oh, they're killin' men and women for a wearin' of the green." That is, I made out she meant it for that tune. With the right hand she picked out what every now and then approached that melody. With the left she did a tum-te-dum which she left entirely to chance, the right hand and its perplexities needing her entire attention. During all of this, without intermission, her foot conscientiously pressed the loud pedal.

Altogether there were seven in the chambermaid's audience. I sat down next to a little wrinkled auburn-haired Irish chambermaid whose face looked positively inspired. She beat time with one foot and both hands. "Ain't it jus' grand!" she whispered to me. "If I c'u'd jus' play like that!" Her eyes sought the ceiling. When the player had finished her rendition there was much applause. One girl left the clouds long enough to ask, "Oh, Jennie, is it really true you never took a lesson?" Jennie admitted it was true. "Think of that, now!" the little woman by me gasped.

The chambermaid next gave an original interpretation of "Believe me if all those endearing young charms." At least it was nearer that than anything else. I had to tear myself away in the middle of what five out of seven people finally would have guessed was "Way down upon the Suwanee River." The faces of the audience were still wreathed in that expression you may catch on a few faces at Carnegie Hall.

Monday there was a chambermaids' meeting. Much excitement. They had been getting seven dollars a week. The management wished to change and pay them by the month, instead—thirty dollars a month. There was something underhanded about it, the girls were sure of that. In addition there was a general feeling that everyone was in for more or less of a cut in wages about September. A general undertone of suspicion that day was over everything and everybody. Several chambermaids were waiting

around the recreation room the few moments before the meeting. They were upset over that sign under the picture of Christ, "No cursing no stealing when tempted look on his kindly face." As long as they'd been in that hotel they'd never heard no cursin' among the girls, and as for stealin'—well, they guessed the guests stole more than ever the girls did. There were too many squealers around that hotel, that was the trouble. One girl spoke up and said it wasn't the hotel. New York was all squealers—worst "race" she ever knew for meanness to one another—nothin' you'd ever see in the Irish!

I thought back over the dinner conversation that noon An Irish girl asked me what my hurry was, when my work didn't begin till 1.30. I told her I helped out the Spanish woman and remarked that I thought it wrong that she didn't get more pay than I. "Say," said the Irish girl, "you jus' look out for your own self in this world and don't you go round worryin' over no one else. You got number one to look out for and that's all."

The excitement of the day was that the Big Boss for the first time took note of the fact I was alive. He said good evening and thought he'd look in my ice chest. My heart did flutter, but I knew I was safe. I had scrubbed and polished that ice chest till it creaked and groaned the Saturday night before. The brass parts were blinding. But there was too much food in it for that hour of the night. He called Schmitz—Schmitz was abject reverence and acquiescence. It was, of course, Kelly's fault

for leaving so much stuff there when he went at 3. And Kelly was gruff as a bear next day. Evidently the Big Boss spoke to him about sending stuff upstairs after the lunch rush was over. He almost broke the plates hurling things out of the ice box at 2.30. And the names he called Schmitz I dare not repeat. He swore and he swore and he *swore!* And he stripped the ice box all but bare.

How down on prohibition were Kelly and many of those waiters! Perhaps all the waiters, but I did not hear all express opinions. A waiter was talking to Kelly about it in front of my counter one day. "How can we keep this up?" the waiter moaned. "There was a time when if you got desperate you could take a nip and it carried you over. But I ask you, how can a man live when he works like this and works and then goes home and sits around and goes to bed, and then gets up and goes back and works and works, and then goes home and sits around? You put a dollar down on the table and look at it, and then pick it up and put it in your pocket again. Hell of a life, I say, and I don't see how we can keep it up with never a drink to make a man forget his troubles!"

Kelly put forth that favorite claim that there was far more evil-doing of every sort and description since prohibition than before—and then added that everyone had his home-brew anyhow. He told of how the chefs and he got to the hotel early one morning and started to make up six gallons of home-brew down in our kitchen. Only, o' course, "some

dirty guy had to go an' squeal" on 'em and Kelly 'most lost his job, did Kelly.

I had a very nice Italian friend—second cook, he called himself—who used to come over to the compartment of Monsieur Le Bon Chef and talk over the partition to me every afternoon from four to half past. He also was not in the least fresh, but just talked and talked about many things. His first name in Italian was "Eusebio," but he found it more convenient in our land to go under the name of "Vwictor." He came from a village of fifty inhabitants not far from Turin, almost on the Swiss border, where they had snow nine months in the year. Why had he journeyed to America? "Oh, I donno. Italians in my home town have too little money and too many children."

Victor was an intelligent talker. I asked him many questions about the labor problem generally. When he first came to this country seven years ago he started work in the kitchen of the Waldorf-Astoria. In those days pay for the sort of general unskilled work he did was fifteen to eighteen dollars a month. Every other day hours were from 6 A.M. to 8.30 P.M.; in between days they got off from 2 to 5 in the afternoon. Now, in the very same job, a man works eight hours a day and gets eighteen dollars a week. Victor at present drew twenty-two dollars a week, plus every chef's allotment of two dollars and forty cents a week "beer money." (It used to be four bottles of beer a day at ten cents a bottle. Now that beer was a doubtful

bestowal, the hotels issued weekly "beer money." You could still buy beer at ten cents a bottle, only practically everyone preferred the cash.)

But Victor thought he was as well off seven years ago on eighteen dollars a month as he would be to-day on eighteen dollars a week. Then, it seems, he had a nice room with one other man for four dollars a month, including laundry. Now he rooms alone, it is true, but he pays five dollars a week for a room he claims is little, if any, better than the old one, and a dollar a week extra for laundry. Then he paid two to three dollars for a pair of shoes, now ten or twelve, and they wear out as fast as the two-dollar shoes of seven years before. Now fifty dollars for a suit no better than the one he used to get for fifteen dollars. Thus spoke Victor.

Besides, Victor could save nothing now, for he had a girl, and you know how it is with women. It's got to be a present all the time. You can't get 'em by a store window without you go in and buy a waist or a hat or goodness knows what all a girl doesn't manage to want. He went into detail over his recent gifts. Why was he so generous as all that to his fair one? Because if he didn't get the things for her he was afraid some other man would.

Nor could Victor understand how people lived in this country without playing more. Every night, every single night, he must find some countryman and play around a little bit before going to bed. "These fellas who work and work all day, and then eat some dinner, and then go home and sit

around and go to bed." No, Victor preferred death to such stagnation. If it was only a game of cards and a glass of wine (prohibition did not seem to exist for Victor and his countrymen) or just walking around the streets, talking. *Anything*, so long as it was *something*.

Victor was a union man. Oh, sure. He was glowing with pride and admiration in the union movement in Italy—there indeed they accomplished things! But in this country, no, the union movement would never amount to much here. For two reasons. One was that working people on the whole were treated too well here to make good unionists. Pay a man good wages and give him the eight-hour day—what kind of a union man will he make? The chances are he won't join at all.

But the main reason why unions would never amount to much here was centered in the race question. Victor told of several cooks' strikes he had been in. What happens? A man stands up and says something, then everybody else says, "Don't listen to him; he's only an Irishman." Some one else says something, and everyone says, "Don't pay any attention to him; he's only an Italian." The next man—he's only a Russian, and so on.

Then pretty soon what happens next? Pretty soon a Greek decides he'll go back to work, and then all the Greeks go back; next an Austrian goes back—all his countrymen follow. And, anyhow, says my Italian friend Eusebio, you can't understand nothin' all them foreigners say, anyhow.

I asked him if Monsieur Le Bon Chef after his start as a strike breaker had finally joined a union. "Oh, I guess he's civilized now," grinned Victor.

Numerous times one person or another about our hotel spoke of the suddenness with which the workers there would be fired. "Bing, you go!" just like that. Kelly, who had been working there over two years, told me that the only way to think of a job was to expect to be fired every day. He claimed he spent his hour's ride in to work every morning preparing himself not to see his time card in the rack, which would mean no more job for him.

I asked Victor one day about the girl who had held my job a year and a half and why she was fired. There was a story for you! Kelly a few days before had told me that he was usually able to "get" anybody. "Take that girl now what had your job. I got her. She was snippy to me two or three times and I won't stand that. It's all right if anybody wants to get good and mad, but I detest snippy folks. So I said to myself, 'I'll get you, young lady,' and within three days I had her!"

Kelly was called away and never finished the story, but Victor did. The girl, it seems, got several slices of ham one day from one of the chefs. She wrapped them carefully in a newspaper and later started up the stairs with the paper folded under her arm, evidently bound for the locker room. Kelly was standing at the foot of the stairs—"Somebody had tipped him off, see?"

"What's the news to-day?" asked Kelly.

"'Ain't had time to read the paper yet," the girl replied.

"Suppose we read it now together," said Kelly, whereupon he slipped the paper out from under her arm and exposed the ham to view.

"You're fired!" said Kelly.

He sent her up to the Big Boss, and he did everything he could think of to get the girl to tell which chef had given her the ham. The girl refused absolutely to divulge that.

The Big Boss came down to our kitchen. He asked each chef in turn if he had given the girl the ham, and each chef in turn said *No.*

The Big Boss came back again in a few minutes. "We can put the detective force of the hotel on this job and find out within a few days who *did* give that ham away and the man will be fired. But I don't want to do it that way. If the man who did it will confess right now that he did I promise absolutely he will not be fired."

A chef spoke up, "I did it."

Within fifteen minutes he was fired.

As ever, the day for leaving arrived. This time I gave notice to Kelly three days in advance, so that a girl could be found to take my place. "The Big Chief and I both said when we seen you, she won't stay long at this job."

"Why not?" I indignantly asked Kelly.

"Ah, shucks!" sighed Kelly. Later: "Well, you're a good kid. You were making good at your job, too.

Only I'll tell y' this. You're too conscientious. Don't pay."

And still later, "Aw, forget this working business and get married."

There was much red tape to leaving that hotel—people to see, cards to sign and get signed. Everyone was nice. I told Kelly—and the news spread—the truth, that I was unexpectedly going to Europe, being taken by the same lady who brought me out from California, her whose kids I looked after. If after six months I didn't like it in Europe—and everyone was rather doubtful that I would, because they don't treat workin' girls so very well in Europe—the lady would pay my way back to America second-class. (The Lord save my soul.)

I told Schmitz I was going on the afternoon of the evening I was to leave. Of course he knew it from Kelly and the others. "Be sure you don't forget to leave your paring knife," was Schmitz's one comment.

Farewells were said—I did surely feel like the belle of the ball that last half hour. On the way out I decided to let bygones be bygones and sought out Schmitz to say good-by.

"You sure you left that paring knife?" said Schmitz.

CONCLUSION

HERE I sit in all the peace and stillness of the Cape Cod coast, days filled with only such work as I love, and play aplenty, healthy youngsters frolicky about me, the warmest of friends close by. The larder is stocked with good food, good books are on the shelves, each day starts and ends with a joyous feeling about the heart.

And I, this sunburnt, carefree person, pretend to have been as a worker among workers. Again some one says, "The artificiality of it!"

Back in that hot New York the girls I labored among are still packing chocolates, cutting wick holes for brass lamp cones, ironing "family," beading in the crowded dress factory. Up at the Falls they are hemming sheets and ticketing pillow cases. In the basement of the hotel some pantry girl, sweltering between the toaster and the egg boiler, is watching the clock to see if rush time isn't almost by.

Granted at the start, if you remember, and granted through each individual job, it was artificial—my part in it all. But what in the world was there to do about that? I was determined that not forever would I take the say-so of others on every phase of the labor problem. Some things I would experience for myself. Certain it is I cannot know any less

than before I started. Could I help knowing at least a bit more? I do know more—I know that I know more!

And yet again I feel constrained to call attention to the fact that six jobs, even if the results of each experience were the very richest possible, are but an infinitesimal drop in what must be a full bucket of industrial education before a person should feel qualified to speak with authority on the subject of labor. Certain lessons were learned, certain tentative conclusions arrived at. They are given here for what they may be worth and in a very humble spirit. Indeed, I am much more humble in the matter of my ideas concerning labor than before I took my first job.

Perhaps the most valuable lesson learned was that a deep distrust of generalizations has been acquired, to last, I hope, the rest of life. It is so easy, so comfortable, to make a statement of fact to cover thousands of cases. Nowhere does the temptation seem to be greater than in a discussion of labor. "Labor wants this and that!" "Labor thinks thus and so!" "Labor does this and the other thing!" Thus speaks the labor propagandist, feeling the thrill of solid millions behind him; thus speaks the "capitalist," feeling the antagonism of solid millions against him.

And all this time, how many hearts really beat as one in the labor world?

Indeed, the situation would clear up with more rapidity if we went to the other extreme and thought

of labor always as thirty million separate individuals. We would be nearer the truth than to consider them as this one great like-minded mass, all yearning for the same spiritual freedom; all eager for the downfall of capitalism.

What can one individual know of the hopes and desires of thirty millions? Indeed, it is a rare situation where one person can speak honestly and intelligently for one hundred others. Most of us know precious little about ourselves. We understand still less concerning anyone else. In a very general way, everyone in the nation wants the same things. That is a good point to remember, for those who would exaggerate group distinctions. In a particular way, no two people function exactly alike, have the same ambitions, same capacities.

There is, indeed, no great like-minded mass of laborers. Instead we have millions of workers split into countless small groups, whose group interests in the great majority of cases loom larger on the horizon than any hold the labor movement, as such, might have on them. Such interests, for instance, as family, nationality, religion, politics. Besides, there is the division which sex interests and rivalries make—the conflict, too, between youth and age.

Yet for the sake of a working efficiency we must do a minimum of classifying. Thirty million is too large a number to handle separately. There seems to be a justification for a division of labor, industrially considered, into three groups, realizing the division is a very loose one:

1. Labor or class-conscious group.
2. Industrially conscious group.
3. Industrially nonconscious group.

The great problem of the immediate future is to get groups 1 and 3 into Group 2. The more idealistic problem of the more distant future is to turn a great industrially conscious group into a socially conscious group.

By the first group, the labor or class-conscious group, is meant the members of the American Federation of Labor, Industrial Workers of the World, four railroad Brotherhoods, Amalgamated Clothing Workers, socialist and communist organizations—workers whose affiliations with certain bodies tend to make them ultraconscious of the fact that they are wage workers and against the capitalist system. Class antagonism is fostered. There is much use of the word "exploited." In their press and on their platforms such expressions are emphasized as "profits for the lazy who exploit the workers." Everything possible is done to paint labor white, the employer black, forgetting that no side has the monopoly in any shade.

To those who from sympathy or antagonism would picture at least organized labor as like-minded, it must be pointed out that for the great part the several millions represented by Group 1 are perhaps more often warring in their aims and desires than acting as one. Never have they acted as one. Organized labor represents but a fraction of labor as a

whole. Some more or less spectacular action on the part of capital against labor always tends to solidify the organized workers. They are potentially like-minded in specific instances. Otherwise the interests of the carpenters' union tends to overshadow the interests of the A. F. of L. as a whole; the interests of the A. F. of L. tend most decidedly to overshadow the interests of organized labor as a whole. Socialists bark at communists. Charges of capitalist tendencies are made against the four Brotherhoods. The women's unions feel legislated against in the affairs of labor. Indeed, only utter stupidity on the part of capital ever could weld organized labor into enough solidarity to get society or anyone else agitated for long. Much of the "open shop" fight borders on such stupidity.

Group 2 is at present but an infinitesimal fraction of labor. It comprises those workers whose background has been fortunate enough, as to both heredity and environment, to allow of their main industrial interests centering around the doing of their particular job well for the sake of their industry as a whole, to which a sentiment of loyalty has been aroused and held. There is no feeling of class antagonism, no assurance that the interests of labor are forever inimical to those of the employer, and *vice versa*. Where such an attitude exists on the part of workers it presupposes an employer of unusual breadth of understanding or a deep love for his fellow-man. As co-operation in industry can be shown to pay socially and financially, so may this

type of employer come more and more to supersede the old-fashioned "boss."

Group 3, the industrially nonconscious workers, includes the great majority of labor in the United States. Under this heading come all those who for reasons connected with the type of industry engaged in, or because of individual or sex characteristics, remain apart from any so-called labor movement. Practically all women fall under this head, most of the foreign labor population, most of unskilled labor. Many members of labor organizations technically belonging in Group 1 really fall under Group 3. The great majority of American labor undoubtedly are not class or group conscious in the sense that they feel themselves as workers pitted against a capitalist class. Temperamentally, intellectually, the doctrines of Karl Marx are not for them. They never heard of Karl Marx. They get up and go to work in the morning. During the day they dub away at something or other, whatever it may be—the chances are it changes rather often—putting no more effort into the day's work than is necessary to hold down an uninteresting job. They want their pay at the end of the week. Many have not the minimum intellectual capacity necessary to do a piece of work properly. Many more have not the minimum physical capacity required for even routine tasks. Very many, indeed, are nervous misfits.

Yet a goodly number in Group 3 represent a high type of worker to whom the doctrine of class warfare is repugnant, and yet whose industrial experience

has never resulted in making them industrially conscious. They feel no particular call to show more than average interest in their job.

Peace, efficiency, production in industry, can come only as Group 2 increases. To recruit from Group 1 will always be difficult. Once labor feels itself hostile to the employer and his interests, which is another way of saying, once the employing group by its tactics succeeds in making labor conclude that "the working class and the employing class have nothing in common," the building up of a spirit of co-operation is difficult indeed. Class consciousness is poor soil in which to plant any seeds of industrial enthusiasm.

Would you, then, asks a dismayed unionist, build up your so-called industrially conscious group at the expense of organized labor? The answer is a purely pragmatic one, based on the condition of things as they are, not as idealists would have them. Rightly or wrongly, the American employing group long ago decided that the organized-labor movement was harmful to American industry. The fact that the labor movement was born of the necessity of the workers, and in the main always flourished because of the continued need of the workers, was never taken into account. Every conceivable argument was and is used against organized labor. Many of those arguments are based on half truths; or no truths at all. The fact remains that probably the majority of the American public believes the organized-labor movement to be against our social, civic,

and industrial welfare. However right or wrong such a deduction is, it is safe to say that for the great part those who hold that belief do so in absolute good faith.

The result is that the American labor movement has developed ever in an atmosphere so hostile that the effect on the growth of the movement has been that which hostile environment always exerts on any growing thing. It has warped the movement. It has emphasized everything hostile within the movement itself. No wonder a fighting spirit has ever been in evidence. No wonder only the fighting type of labor leader has emerged. The movement has had little or no opportunity for construction. Always the struggle for existence itself has been uppermost. No wonder the conclusion can justly be drawn that the American labor movement has not always played a highly productive role in American industry.

It has been everybody's fault, if we are searching for a resting place for the blame of it all. Which gets us no place.

The point is, looked at without the tinted glasses of either capital or labor, that the psychology of the American employer for the past, assuredly the present, and at least the near future, has been, and is, and will be, so inimical to organized labor that the movement would not be allowed to function as a constructive industrial force. Too much of its energies must go to fighting. At the same time, too much of the energies of the employer go to fighting

it. The public pays the price, and it is enormous. The spiritual cost of bitterness of spirit far outweighs any monetary loss to industry, tremendous as that is.

Why is not the present, then, a wise time in which to encourage an alternative movement, one that has not the effect of a red rag to a bull? Labor can shout its loudest; the fact remains that in this country labor is very far from controlling the industrial situation. Therefore, the employer must still be taken into account in any program of industrial reform. That being so, it might be saner to try some scheme the employer will at least listen to than stubbornly continue to fight the issue out along the old lines of organized labor alone, at the very mention of which the average employer grows red in the face.

It is not, indeed, that we would do away with the organized-labor movement, if we could. The condition is far too precarious for that. Labor too often needs the support of unionism to keep from being crushed. The individual too often needs the educational influence organization exerts. Organized labor, despite the handicaps within and without, has too much of construction to its credit. The point is, further growth in the organized-labor movement, considering the development forced upon the movement by its own past and the ever antagonistic attitude of business, will not, for the present and immediate future, necessarily spell peace, efficiency, production. Rather, continued, if not increased, bitterness.

What is the development, at least for the present

and immediate future, which will improve the situation?

The first move—and by that we mean the thing to start doing *to-day*—is to begin converting the non-industrially conscious group into the industrially conscious group. Group 3 is peaceful—they call no attention to themselves by any unrest or demands or threats. But they are not efficient or productive, the reason being that they have not enough interest in their jobs, or in many cases are not physically or mentally competent. Theirs are sins of omission, not commission.

The process of this conversion means many things. It means first and foremost an understanding of human nature; a realization that the great shortcoming of industry has been that it held, as organized, too little opportunity for a normal outlet to the normal and more or less pressing interests and desires of human beings.

It worked in a vicious circle. The average job gave the worker little or no chance to show any initiative, to feel any sense of ownership or responsibility, to use such intellect and enthusiasm as he possessed. The attitude of the average employer built up no spirit of loyalty or co-operation between management and men. Hence these very human tendencies, compelling expression in a normal personality, became atrophied, as far as the job was concerned, and sought such functioning as a discouraging environment left them capable of in fields outside of industry—in many cases, within the labor movement

itself. The less capacity the job called out, the more incapable the worker became. Tendencies inherent in human nature, whose expressions all these years could have been enriching the individual and industry, and therefore the nation as a whole, have been balked entirely, or shunted off to find expression often in antisocial outlets. In some cases the loss to industry was small, since the individual capacities at best were small. In other cases the loss was great indeed. In every case, encouragement of the use of capacities increases the possibilities of those capacities.

The first step in this process of conversion then is to reorganize the relationship between management and men so that as many outlets as possible within industry can be found for those human expressions whose functioning will enrich the individual and industry. Which means that little by little the workers must share in industrial responsibilities. The job itself, with every conceivable invention for calling out the creative impulse, can never, under the machine process, enlist sufficient enthusiasm for sustained interest and loyalty on the part of the worker. He must come to have a word in management, in determining the conditions under which he labors five and a half to seven days a week.

It is a nice point here. The parlor Bolshevik pictures all labor eager and anxious and capable of actually controlling industry. The fact of the matter is that most individuals from any and every walk of life prefer to sidestep responsibility. Yet

everyone does better under some. Too much may have a more disastrous effect than not enough—to the individual as well as industry. Here again is where there must be caution in generalizing. Each employer has a problem of his own. Nor can the exact amount of responsibility necessary to call out maximum efficiency and enthusiasm ever be determined in advance.

I have talked to numerous employers whose experience has been the same. At first their employees showed no desire for any added responsibility whatever. Had there not been the conviction that they were on the right track, the whole scheme of sharing management with the workers would have been abandoned. Little by little, however, latent abilities were drawn out; as more responsibilities were intrusted to the workers, their capacities for carrying the responsibilities increased. In two cases that I know of personally, the employees actually control the management of their respective companies. In both these companies the employers announced that their businesses were making more money than under one-sided management.

On the whole, this development of the partnership idea in industry is a matter of the necessary intellectual conviction that the idea is sound—whether that conviction be arrived at *via* ethics or "solid business judgment"—to be followed by the technical expert who knows how to put the idea into practice. That he will know only after careful study of each individual plant as a situation peculiar unto

itself. He is a physician, diagnosing a case of industrial anæmia. As in medicine, so industry has its quacks—experts who prescribe pink pills for pale industries, the administration of which may be attended with a brief show of energy and improvement, only to relapse into the old pallor. As between a half-baked "expert" and an "ignorant" employer whose heart is in the right place—take the employer. If he sincerely feels that long enough has he gone on the principle, "I'll run my business as I see fit and take suggestions from no one"; if it has suddenly come over him that, after all, the employee is in most ways but another like himself, and that all this time that employee might be laboring under the notion, often more unconscious than conscious, that he would "like to run his job as he saw fit and take suggestions from no one"; if, then, that employer calls his men together and says, "let's run the business as we all together see fit and take suggestions from one another"—then is that employer and that business on the road to industrial peace, efficiency, and production, expert or no expert. The road is uphill, the going often rough and discouraging, but more often than not the load of management becomes lighter, easing overburdened muscles; the load of labor in a sense heavier, yet along with the added weight, as they warm to the task there develops a sense that they are trusted, are necessary to the success of the march, that they now are men, doing man-sized work. Perhaps in only a minimum of cases will the load ever be divided "fifty-fifty." Too soon would

the workers tire of their added burden, too few could carry the added weight. The fact remains that with management carrying the whole load, the march is going very badly indeed on the whole. At times the procession scarcely seems to move. There can surely be no harm in the employing end shifting a bit of the burden. A bit cannot wreck either side. Managerial shoulders may feel more comfortable under the decreased weight and try another shift.

In recruiting Group 2 from Group 3, it is the employer, on the whole, who must take the initiative. Labor may show no desire to help shoulder the burden. Yet they must shoulder some of it to amount to anything themselves, if for no other reason. It may take actual pushing and shoving at first to get them on their way.

Recruiting from Group 1 is a different matter. There sometimes are workers who would grab most of the load at the start—or all of it. Their capacities are untried, the road and its twistings and turnings is unknown to them. Each side has been throwing stones at the other, tripping each other up. There is a hostile spirit to begin with, a spirit of distrust between management and men. Here then is a more difficult problem. It is more than a matter of shifting the load a bit; it is a matter of changing the spirit as well. That takes much patience, much tact. It is not a case of the employer making all the overtures. Each side is guilty of creating cause for suspicion and distrust. Each side has to experience a change of heart. It is one thing to convince a pre-

viously unthinking person; it is another to bring about a change of heart in one frankly antagonistic. Making industrially enthusiastic workers out of class and labor-conscious workers will indeed be a task requiring determination, tact, patience without end, and wisdom of many sorts—on both sides. Some one has to sell the idea of co-operation to labor as well as to the employer. And then know the job is only begun. But the biggest start is made when the atmosphere is cleared so that the partnership idea itself can take root. Some on both sides never will be converted.

What about the great body of workers unfit physically, mentally, nervously, to carry any additional load at all? Here is a field for the expert. Yet here is a field where society as a whole must play a part. Most of the physical, mental, nervous harm is done before ever the individual reaches industry. Indeed, at most, industry is but one influence out of many playing on the lives of the human beings who labor. Nor can it ever be studied as a sphere entirely apart. Much is aggravated by conditions over which industry itself has no direct control. Health centers, civic hygienic measures of all sorts, are of great importance. A widespread education in the need of healthy and spiritually constructive influences during the first ten years of life, if we are to have healthy, wholesome, and capable adults, must gain headway. Saner preparation for life as a whole must take the place of the lingering emphasis on the pedagogical orthodoxy still holding sway.

While industry is not responsible for many conditions which make subnormal workers, industry cannot evade the issue or shift the burden if it desires peace, efficiency, production. These goals cannot be obtained on any basis other than the welfare of the workers. No matter how sane is welfare work within the plant, there must develop a growing interest and understanding in "off the plant" work. The job is blamed for much. Yet often the worker's relation to the job is but the reflection of the conditions he left to go to work in the morning, the conditions he returns to after the day's work is done. There again is a vicious circle. The more unfortunate the conditions of a man's home life—we do not refer to the material side alone—the less efficiently he is apt to work during the day. The less efficiently he works during the day, the less competent he will be to better his home conditions.

When men expressed themselves in their particular handicraft they found much of their joy in life in their work. One of the by-products of large-scale industry and the accompanying subdivision of labor has been the worker's inevitable lack of interest in the monotonous job. Since too long hours spent at mechanical, repetitious labor result in a lowered standard of efficiency, and rebellion on the part of the worker, there has followed a continual tendency toward a reduction in the length of the working day. The fewer hours spent on the job, the greater the opportunity conditions outside industry proper have

to exert their influence on character formation. With the shorter working day there develop more pressing reasons than ever for the emphasis on off-the-plant activities, and wholesome home and civic conditions. All these together, and not industry alone, make the worker.

The growth of the spirit and fruit of industrial democracy will not bring any millennium. It will merely make a somewhat better world to live in here and now. The dreamers of us forget that in the long run the world can move only so far and so fast as human nature allows for, and few of us evaluate human nature correctly. The six industrial experiences in this book have made me feel that the heart of the world is even warmer than I had thought—folk high and low are indeed readier to love than to hate, to help than to hinder. But on the whole our circles of understanding and interest are bounded by what our own eyes see and our own ears hear. The problems of industry are enormously aggravated by the fact that the numbers of individuals concerned even in particular plants, mills, mines, factories, stretch the capacities of human management too often beyond the possibilities of human understanding and sympathy. More or less artificial machinery must be set up to bring management and men in contact with each other to the point where the problems confronting each side are within eyesight and earshot of the other. Up to date it has been as impossible for labor to understand the difficulties of management as for management to understand the

difficulties of labor. Neither side ever got within shouting distance of the other—except, indeed, to shout abuse! Many a strike would have been averted had the employer been willing to let his workers know just what the conditions were which he had to face; or had the workers in other instances shown any desire to take those conditions into account.

For, when all is said and done, the real solution of our industrial difficulties lies not in expert machinery, however perfect, for the adjustment or avoidance of troubles. "Industrial peace must come not as a result of the balance of power with a supreme court of appeal in the background. It must arise as the inevitable by-product of mutual confidence, real justice, constructive good will."[1]

Any improved industrial condition in the future must take as its foundation the past one hundred years of American industry. The fact that this foundation was not built of mutual confidence, real justice, constructive good will is what makes the task of necessary reconstruction so extremely difficult. Countless persons might be capable of devising the mechanical approach to peace and prosperity—courts of arbitration, boards of representation, and the like. But how bring about a change of heart in the breast of millions?

It is a task so colossal that one would indeed prefer to lean heavily on the shoulders of an all-wise Provi-

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[1] From Constitution of Industrial Council for the Building Industry, England.

dence and let it go with the consoling assurance that, as to a solution, "the Lord will provide." But the echoes of recriminations shouted by each side against the other; the cries of foul play; the accusations of willful injustice; the threats of complete annihilation of capital by organized labor, of organized labor by capital—must reach to heaven itself, and Providence might well pause in dismay. Constructive good will? Where make a beginning?

The beginnings, however, are being made right on earth, and here and now. It is a mistake to look for spectacular changes, reforms on a large scale. Rather do the tendencies toward mutual understanding and this all-necessary good will evince themselves only here and there, in quiet experiments going on in individual plants and factories. The seed will bear fruit but slowly. But the seed is planted.

Planted? Nay, the seed has been there forever, nor have the harshest developments in the most bloodless of industries ever been able to crush it out. It is part and parcel of human nature that we can love more easily and comfortably than hate, that we can help more readily than hinder. Flourishing broadcast through all human creation is enough good will to revolutionize the world in a decade. It is not the lack of good will. Rather the channels for its expression are blocked—blocked by the haste and worry of modern life, by the multiplicity of material possessions which so frequently choke our sympathies; by the cruelties of competition, too often run to the extremes of crushing out inborn human

lness. And most of all, blocked by ignorance and understanding of our fellow-beings.

t is a sound business deduction that the greatest nbling blocks in the difficulties between labor capital to-day resolve themselves down to just t lack of understanding of our fellow-beings. without that understanding, how build up a it of mutual confidence, real justice, constructive d will? On what other foundation can a saner ustrialism be built?

'he place to make the beginning is in each in- idual shop and business and industry. The spark tart the blaze in each human heart, be it beating he side of capital or on that of labor, is the sudden elation that every worker is far more the exact nterpart of his employer in the desires of his y and soul than otherwise; that the employer is other than the worker in body and soul, except t his scope and range of problems to be met are a different level. True it is that we are all far re "sisters and brothers under the skin" than ngers.

No sane person is looking for a perfect industri- m, is watching for the day when brotherly love l be the motive of all human conduct. But it is hin the bounds of sanity to work toward an in- ase in understanding between the human factors industry; it is justifiable to expect improved in- trial conditions, once increased understanding is ught about. Industry needs experts in scien- e management, in mental hygiene, in cost account-

ing—in fields innumerable. But what industry needs more than anything else—more, indeed, than all the reformers—are translators—translators of human beings to one another. "Reforms" will follow of themselves.

THE END

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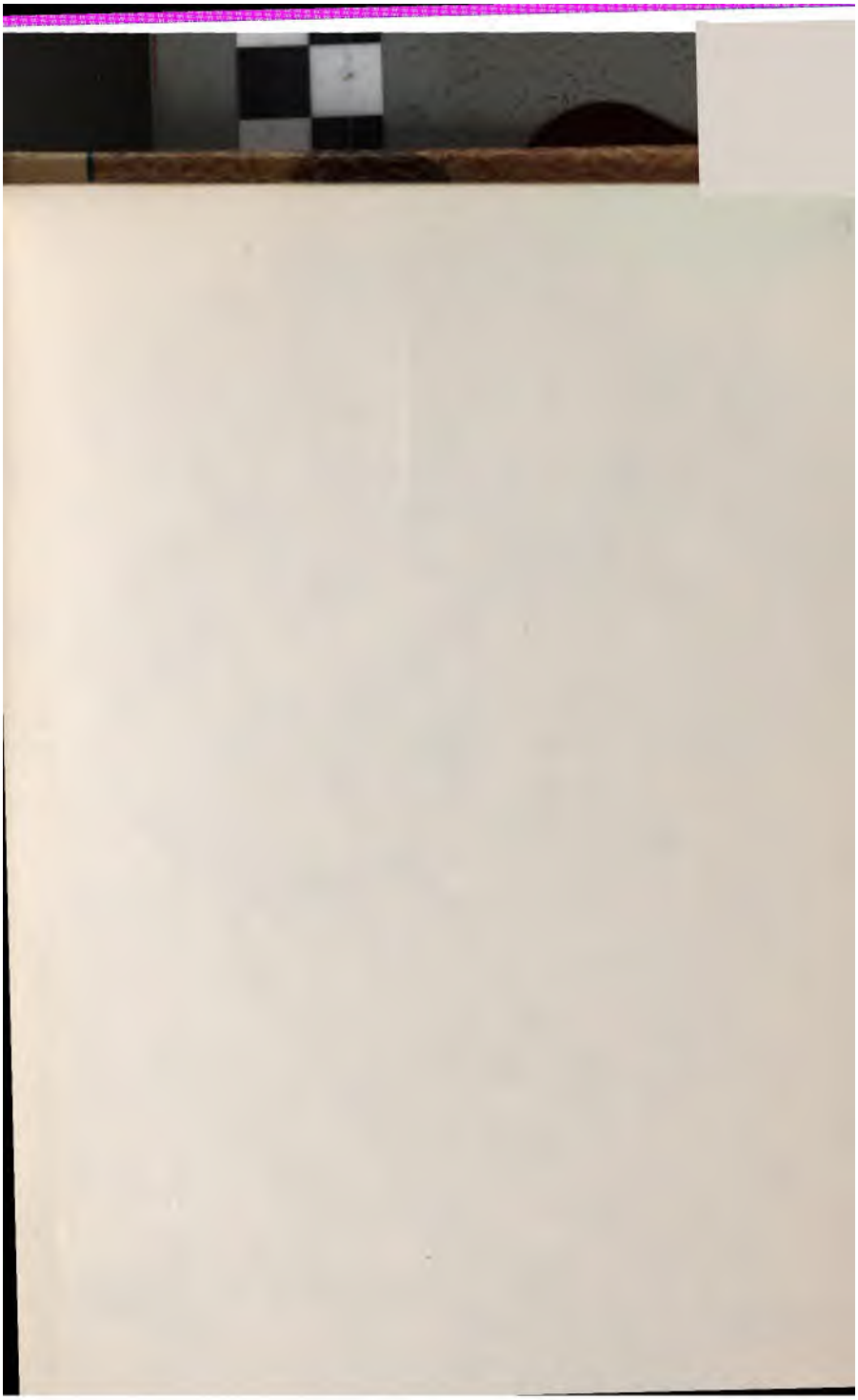

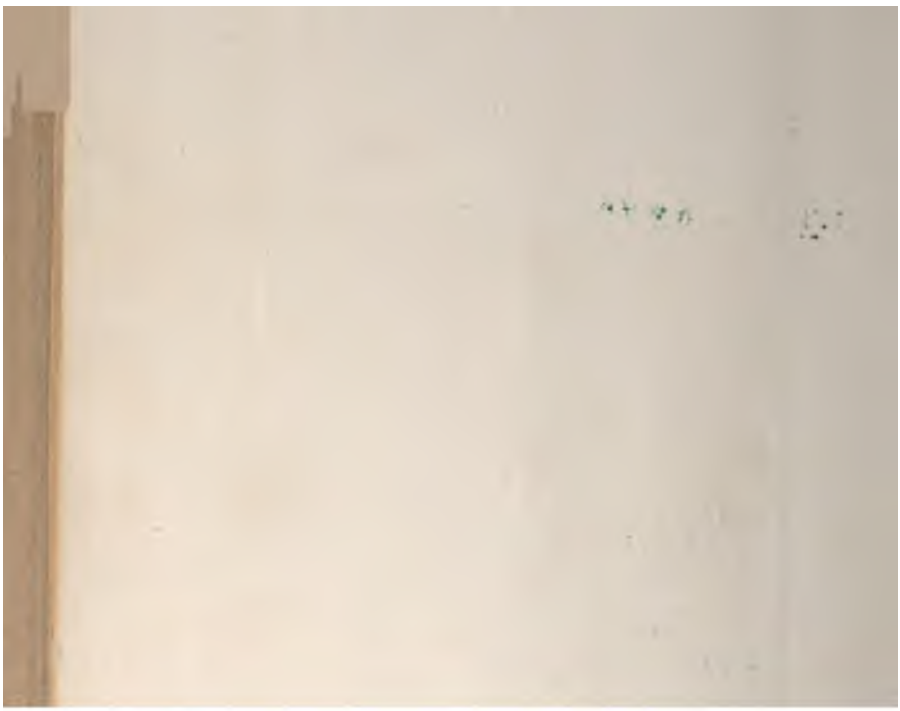

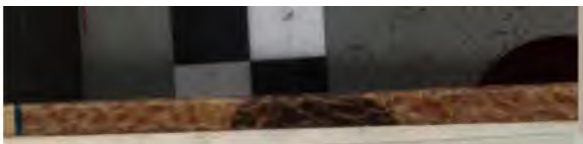

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